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# INDEPENDENT IRAQ 1932-1958

*A Study in Iraqi Politics*

BY  
MAJID KHADDURI

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*To My Wife*

MAJDIA



*'Quiconque écrit l'histoire de son temps doit s'attendre qu'on lui reprochera tout ce qu'il a dit et tout ce qu'il n'a pas dit; mais ces petits dégoûts ne doivent point décourager un homme qui aime la vérité et la liberté, qui n'attend rien, ne craint rien, et ne demande rien, et qui borne son ambition à cultiver les lettres.'*

VOLTAIRE À M. BERTIN DU ROCHERET  
14 April 1732

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

SEVERAL far-reaching events and developments have taken place in Iraq since the appearance of the first edition of this book in 1951. Not only have schemes for economic reconstruction been drawn up, but also political upheavals, such as those of 1952 and 1958, have greatly influenced the course of the political development of the country. Moreover a considerable volume of new material has become available, whether in the *Documents on German Foreign Policy* or in the published memoirs of Arab statesmen, which has thrown fresh light on certain aspects of Iraqi politics.

I have tried, however, to verify material derived from published sources by oral interviews with leading statesmen who readily have given me their assistance. I should like to mention in particular Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, al-Haj Amin al-Husayni, Ali Mahmud, Jamal al-Husayni, and several others whom I had not had the benefit of consulting earlier owing to their exile or internment while the first edition was being prepared. I have again had the pleasure of obtaining additional material from leading Iraqi public men during my visits to Iraq in 1955 and 1958. Among others I should like to mention in particular the late Amir Abd al-Ilah, former Regent and Crown Prince, the late General Nuri as-Sa'id, the late Salih Jabr, General Taha al Hashimi, General Nur ad-Din Mahmud, Naji Shawkat, Mustafa and Arshad al-'Umari, Sa'id Qazzaz, Baba Ali, Muhammad Hadid, Husayn Jamil, and Mustafa Ali. Above all I am most grateful to Kamil Chadirchi, Siddiq Shanshal, and Khalil Kanna, who gave me a detailed account of recent developments in Iraq. During visits to London and Bonn I have benefited from the expert advice of such persons as Sir Reader Bullard, Sir John Troutbeck, Mr. C. J. Edmonds, Dr. Fritz Grobba, Harold Beeley, and Commodore Buss. To these, as well as to other unrecorded names, I wish to acknowledge the invaluable assistance given to me during the preparation of this edition.

I wish to repeat my statement in the preface of the first edition that I have been under no illusion that the public men whom I had the privilege of interviewing have not often given me *post hoc, ergo hoc* explanations of events. I have, therefore, examined their statements critically and verified each from other sources.



I have also frequently been assisted by valuable comments made on parts or the whole of the book. I should like to acknowledge those made by Sheeth Nu'man and Brigadier Abd al-Muttalib Amin of Baghdad, Major William F. Hintz, and Datmar H. Finke of the Office of Military History of the Department of Defence, Washington, D.C. I likewise wish to acknowledge the assistance of the staff of the Royal Institute of International Affairs and in particular of Miss Hermia Oliver. To my wife I acknowledge many valuable suggestions as well as her unfailing encouragement. These and other unrecorded kindnesses have certainly rendered my task less difficult and have helped me to avoid many errors of fact or judgement of which I was not aware. It goes without saying, however, that none of these persons is responsible for any error which remains, or for my own personal opinions.

MAJID KHADDURI

May 1959

## CONTENTS

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION	vii
I INTRODUCTION	1
II THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT	10
III TRIAL AND ERROR IN SELF-GOVERNMENT I (1932-5)	34
IV TRIAL AND ERROR IN SELF-GOVERNMENT II (1935-6)	52
V THE FIRST MILITARY COUP D'ÉTAT, 1936	69
VI THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COUP D'ÉTAT (1936-7)	93
VII FURTHER COUPS D'ÉTAT. I (1937-40)	126
VIII FURTHER COUPS D'ÉTAT. II (1940-1)	159
IX THE CLIMAX: APRIL-MAY 1941	212
X FROM WAR TO PEACE	244
XI RECURRENCE OF COUPS D'ÉTAT	259
XII. CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	288
XIII. FOREIGN POLICY	307
XIV. PROSPECTS OF REFORM	351
APPENDICES	
I. THE HASHIMI FAMILY	369
II. THE IRAQI CABINETS	370
III. GENERAL NURI'S MEMORANDUM OF 15 DECEMBER 1940	373
IV. LETTER FROM THE MUFTI OF JERUSALEM TO HITLER, 20 JANUARY 1941	378
V. SYRIA-IRAQ PROTOCOL SIGNED AT PARIS, 27-28 MAY 1941: CLAUSES RELATING TO IRAQ	381
INDEX	383
MAP: IRAQ AND HER NEIGHBOURS	at end



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

ON 3 October 1932, by the vote of fifty-two States-members, Iraq was admitted to membership of the League of Nations as an independent country. The League's decision, one of the most peaceful in its history, was coupled with a resolution to terminate the mandate, and thus Iraq was immediately raised from dependency to full-fledged international status.

In welcoming the admission of Iraq to the League, M. Politis, President of the Assembly, declared with great satisfaction that the event

bears witness to the League's capacity to achieve pacific successes . . . which, without the League . . . would probably never have taken place save by violence. The League thus . . . shows that, by the very action of its rules, it does in fact afford an opportunity of attaining by evolution what otherwise could in most cases only be attained by revolution.<sup>1</sup>

M. Yevtitch, accredited representative of Yugoslavia, declared that, as rapporteur of the committee on admission, he had great pleasure in commending the admission of Iraq to the League. 'It is a pure coincidence', M. Yevtitch went on to say, 'that it should fall to the representative of a country whose whole history has been one long and bitter struggle for liberty to contribute its modest quota to the task of admitting the Kingdom of Iraq to the League of Nations.'<sup>2</sup> M. Yevtitch might have added that both Iraq and his country had been once but two sequestered provinces on the opposite sides of an empire that extended from the Adriatic to the Persian Gulf, and that before their final liberation they had long languished under the tyranny of Ottoman administration. Serbia was fortunate enough to obtain her full freedom at the Congress of Berlin (1878); but when Iraq was formally detached from Turkey at Lausanne (1923), her independence was only 'provisionally' recognized by the Allied Powers, subject to mandatory tutelage until 1932, when her full freedom was finally achieved. It was indeed more significant than mere 'coincidence',

<sup>1</sup> League of Nations, *Official Journal: Records of the 13th Ordinary Session of the Assembly* (Special Suppl. no. 104; Geneva, 1932), p. 49.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.



as M. Yevtitch had declared, that the duty of commending a former Ottoman province to League membership should devolve upon Yugoslavia, another former Ottoman province.

The process of achieving full independence by other former Ottoman provinces was yet to continue. When the Second World War broke out, the League of Nations could claim among its members, apart from the Balkans, four former Ottoman provinces in Asia and Africa. There are now eight in the United Nations organization. This process, whether regretted as the dissolution of a great empire or hailed as the progressive evolution of the Middle East, is an important phenomenon in the history of the whole East. Its accomplishment was significantly noted by none other than Rüstü Aras, representative of the mother-country, who presided over the special meeting of the League Assembly on 26 May 1937, and welcomed the admission of Egypt as having 'completed the successive stages of a progress of evolution as peaceful as it is glorious'.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE IRAQI NATIONAL MOVEMENT AS PART OF THE ARAB MOVEMENT

The winning of Iraq's independence, which seemed to the outside world in 1932 to be merely a happy combination of favourable circumstances—Britain's satisfaction with the Iraq Treaty, the attempt of the Great Powers to demonstrate the possibility of change through peaceful means, and the League's desire to increase its membership—was in fact the culmination of protracted negotiations between Iraq and Great Britain; and this was only one act in a larger movement of the challenge of Arab nationalism to European imperialism.

The Arab nationalist movement is a relatively recent phenomenon in the Arab world. From the opening of the sixteenth century, when the Arab countries fell under the domination of the Turks, to the end of the nineteenth, the Arabs remained loyal subjects of the Ottoman Sultan. During the Hamidian period (1876–1909) pious Arabs found spiritual comfort in the autocratic shadow of a caliph who claimed to govern them after the fashion of the early Muslim caliphs. When, however, the Western idea of nationalism triumphed in the Balkans, it captured the imagination of other subject races of the empire. Nationalism, it is contended, may easily develop as a result of propaganda and bad administration; and this was nowhere more true than under Ottoman rule.

<sup>1</sup> *Monthly Summary of the League of Nations*, vol. 17, no. 5 (May 1937), p. 91.

When the Young Turks seized power in 1908, enlightened Arabs, as other non-Turkish elements of the empire, were attracted by their policy which sought to transform Turkey into a modern constitutional State. But the Young Turks, who proved to be more nationalistic and less liberal than they professed, embarked upon a policy of Turkification which aimed at transforming all the racial elements of the empire into Turks. This led to an open rupture between Arabs and Turks. Until now the Arab nationalists, afraid of disrupting Islamic unity, had demanded an autonomous status under the Sultan; but the negative attitude of the Young Turks pushed the Arab nationalists to the more extreme demands which culminated in the revolt of 1916.

The fathers of the Arab nationalist movement, important as they were, are too numerous to be mentioned here; when, however, the First World War broke out, leadership devolved upon Sharif Husayn of Hijaz. All of Husayn's sons played an important role in the prosecution of the Arab Revolt, but the one who played the most significant part was Husayn's third son, Faysal. Whether as a soldier in the desert, or as a national leader in Syria and Iraq, his ultimate aim was to espouse the general Arab cause.

Born fifteen years before the end of the nineteenth century, Faysal was destined to witness the shifting fortunes of the Ottoman Empire since the Hamidian period. He was brought up as a loyal subject of Sultan Abd al-Hamid, who ruled the empire as Caliph of all the Muslims and commanded the allegiance of pious Turks and Arabs. Thus Sharif Husayn, Faysal's father, with other notables of Mecca, could hardly question the sacred authority of their Padishah. In 1893 Sharif Husayn was invited to Constantinople, and remained there as the exiled guest of the Sultan for fifteen years. His sons, who received their education in the Ottoman capital, witnessed the rise of nationalism which eventually disrupted the Sultan's empire. During the decade in which the nascent Arab nationalist movement crystallized into a well-defined movement, Faysal emerged as the most promising Arab leader of those who distinguished themselves both in war and peace.

The story of Faysal as the chief champion of the Arab cause opens with the arresting picture of his dramatic capture of Damascus in 1918. Until then, as one of the military commanders, he was merely carrying out the orders of his father, with the help of General Allenby and the advice of T. E. Lawrence, in order to bring the holy war against the Turks to a successful conclusion. After his entry into



Damascus, Faysal became the chosen leader of the Syrian nationalists who sought the restoration of the Umayyad capital as it had been in the glorious Arab past.

The young desert leader, who had just concluded his military career upon the cessation of hostilities with Turkey, was sent to Paris to represent his father at the Peace Conference and to plead for Syria's aspirations to independence. As a soldier who attained conclusive victories on the battlefield, Faysal, perhaps, expected to achieve similar conclusive results at the conference table. He was, however, shocked at the undisguised bargaining for what seemed to him to be unquestionable Arab rights. Though an ally of the victorious Powers, he realized that the Arab world, and more particularly Syria, had become a pawn in the diplomatic game of the Great Powers. He presented the Arab claims for independence before the Council of Ten, but secret arrangements, which reflected the ambitions of the Great Powers in the Arab world, ruined his case.

Faysal returned to Syria with an indelible memory of his brief diplomatic experience at Paris. He was not alarmed, for the soldierly spirit was still alive in him. In a speech which he made after his arrival at Beirut (30 April 1919), he conveyed to his people the result of his diplomatic mission. 'Complete independence', he declared, 'is never given; it is always taken.' His report was not encouraging, but the Syrians caught an echo of the words. Faysal urged his people to unite in order to be able to play their proper part in the determination of their future life. He contended that the fate of Syria, dependent as it was on the Great Powers, should not be determined entirely at their pleasure. This attitude eventually led to a quarrel with France, for neither Faysal nor France was prepared to share authority over Syria. But it was a fight between unequal partners. Within a few hours Faysal's forces were shattered at Maysalun (24 July 1920) and his throne at Damascus was for ever lost.

Just as the seat of the Arab Empire moved from Medina to Damascus and later to Baghdad, Faysal's political activities shifted from the capitals of Hijaz to Syria and finally to Iraq. The British suggested that he should accede to the throne of Iraq, but he would not accept it unless it was offered to him by the Iraqis themselves. Faysal, moreover, was not prepared to accept the new throne under a mandate. Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, promised Faysal that Britain's relations with Iraq would be governed by a Treaty of Alliance. It was thus that Faysal not only

obtained another throne for himself, but also won for Iraq more advantageous terms than Great Britain had been prepared to give without him. Iraq, it is true, had already been promised self-government, but Britain had not yet made up her mind what sort of a government should be set up. It was a happy coincidence that there was an available candidate for a vacant throne. No better choice could have been made. From the British standpoint, Faysal's Arab Government satisfied the angry clamours of the Iraqi nationalists; and for Faysal, Iraq afforded new possibilities of championing the Arab cause.

#### FAYSAL'S POLICY

Faysal's coming to Iraq did not bring that immediate full independence which he and the Iraqis had expected. Churchill's version of the treaty which he had promised Faysal to replace the mandate contained all the substance, though not the form, of that mandate. 'This is not the kind of treaty which Mr Churchill promised me in London', complained Faysal in an hour of despair. But Faysal's bitter experience in Syria had taught him the lesson never to clash with a Great Power in Iraq. He would never again yield to the advice of the extreme nationalists. The negative attitude of the Syrian extremists, he contended, had definitely resulted in a serious national loss. In Iraq Faysal thought it more prudent to accept what Britain was prepared to give, while he continued to press for further concessions under more favourable circumstances. He followed a policy aptly called in Arabic 'take and ask', or, in Western terminology, 'step by step'. This moderate approach to Anglo-Iraqi relations proved not only more advantageous to Iraq, but it also fitted well into the pattern of British colonial policy, which allowed dependencies to develop towards self-government by a slow and peaceful method.

Though hot-tempered and impatient, Faysal took a hopeful view of the treaty and ordered his ministers to sign it (10 October 1922). But the immediate reactions to the acceptance of the treaty were indeed grave and disastrous. Both Faysal and England fell into disfavour in the eyes of the Iraqi public. England was attacked for having deliberately denied Iraq her rightful independence, and Faysal was denounced as a traitor who had sold his country to save his skin. It took all his persuasive genius to convince the Iraqi public of the sincerity of his efforts and the soundness of his policy.

The treaty of 1922 taught both Faysal and Britain that it could not



be regarded as a basis for a permanent Anglo-Iraqi friendship. The Iraqi nationalists were not prepared to accept any plan short of complete independence and the abrogation of the mandate. The treaty was revised in 1923 by a protocol which shortened its period from twenty years to four; and in 1926 and 1927 it was replaced by other treaties which, though they did not much advance Iraq's status towards full independence, demonstrated that Great Britain was quite prepared to grant Iraq her independence piecemeal.

In 1930 a final compromise was reached. The treaty of 30 June 1930 reconciled Iraq's national aspirations and Great Britain's fundamental interests. It was indeed Faysal's crowning effort, since it achieved for Iraq her much cherished independence but conceded to Britain her essential imperial interests.<sup>1</sup> The treaty was denounced in Iraq by the extremists and in England by the imperialists. Sponsored, however, by General Nuri as-Sa'id, Prime Minister of Iraq, it was finally ratified by Parliament and came into force in 1932.

When Iraq was admitted as a member of the League of Nations, Faysal's name was so deservedly associated with the event that all those accredited representatives who spoke in the League Assembly congratulated him on 'the great work he has successfully accomplished'. General Nuri, Prime Minister of Iraq, endorsed all that had been said about his sovereign and declared that 'the homage which had been rendered to him in this great Assembly is the homage which he deserves'.<sup>2</sup> Sir John Simon, British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, had probably interpreted the real sentiment of His Majesty's Government when he declared in the League Assembly that without Faysal's 'wise and energetic co-operation it would have been impossible, whatever might have been the good will on the side of the Power discharging its mandate, for the young State of Iraq in the space of no more than twelve years to qualify, as it has qualified, to take its place, as it now takes its place with the assent and approval of us all, in the comity of the League of Nations'.<sup>3</sup>

#### FAYSAL'S ROLE AS KING AND NATIONAL LEADER

The present writer does not claim that Faysal is to be esteemed without reservation. Nor is it the aim of this work to give a full

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of the treaty see Chapter XI.

<sup>2</sup> League of Nations, *Official Journal: Records of the 13th Ordinary Session of the Assembly* (Special Suppl. no. 104; Geneva, 1932), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

picture of Faysal's career, but only of such phases of it as affected Iraq after her rise to independence. For the scope of the present study covers a period which begins only a year before Faysal's death. Faysal's role in this period was of prime importance, for he laid the foundation upon which his successors, according to their lights, built up the present structure. The difference between Iraq today and Faysal's expectations of it is one of the most significant aspects of the recent history of Iraq.

The importance of Faysal's achievements, however, was never fully appreciated by his people until his death. When the news of his sudden and unexpected end reached his people, an inevitable reaction in his favour took place. Iraq suddenly awoke in the midst of a national crisis—the Assyrian affair—to find herself without her staunch national leader. Faysal's death, which was undoubtedly hastened by the Assyrian incident, marked the beginning of unlimited admiration for him in Iraq. He was indeed like many other heroes in history, worshipped only after their death.

Faysal's role in building up the Iraqi State can hardly be exaggerated. He came to the throne of Iraq, it will be remembered, with the help of the British; and, though his accession was approved by a national plebiscite, there were certain sections of the population that either did not want him or were not very enthusiastic for him. But Faysal steadily grew stronger with the years. He built up his own party and gained an increasing popular support for his administration and policy with each new step he attained towards independence. Though a young man, hardly thirty-six years old, Faysal ascended the throne of Iraq with the ripe experience of a decade crowded with events and episodes. His quarrel with the French in Syria taught him a great lesson; and his relations with the British in Iraq proved that he had become an abler diplomat and more far-seeing statesman than either his British or Arab friends had expected.

Faysal's greatest asset was his ability to hold a balance between the British and the Iraqi nationalists. He realized that British help and sympathy were essential both to protect Iraq against hostile neighbours and to bring the mandatory regime to an end. He genuinely believed in the value of British friendship, and contended that British and Iraqi interests were not essentially irreconcilable. It was thus that he was capable both of securing British sympathy for Iraq's national aspirations and of controlling the nationalist elements. He was, it is true, reproached at times for having encouraged the



opposition parties in order to obtain more favourable terms in his treaty negotiations with Britain. But it is also true that he restrained nationalist extremists who were never satisfied with any treaty with Britain short of complete independence. He was indeed a great moderating factor in Anglo-Iraqi relations, and his loss was keenly felt during the crisis of 1941 when the treaty with Britain was put to the test.

Faysal, moreover, was able to win the confidence of the Iraqi nationalists. He gathered around him a number of able men ready to serve their country with devotion. Some of these men, originally from Iraq, had served in the Turkish army and then with him in Hijaz and Syria. When Faysal moved to Baghdad these men, together with a number of Syrian Arabs, moved with him. There was, it is true, a good deal of jealousy felt by other Iraqi politicians who were not originally with Faysal (and some of them, indeed, did not desert the Turks until the collapse of Turkey), who formed an opposition. But Faysal's personality and leadership soon dominated all those around him and he was respected, though not loved, by all. 'No-one could look at the Emir Feisal', Robert Lansing, Secretary of State of the United States, keenly observed, 'without the instinctive feeling that there was a man whom nature had chosen to be a leader of men, a man who was worthy to be a leader of men.'<sup>1</sup>

Nor was Faysal capable only of controlling the townsmen. In a country like Iraq, where the tribal population had given much trouble to the Ottoman and British administrations in the past, the need for someone who could mediate between the tribes and the central authority was keenly felt. Faysal understood the tribal mentality and

<sup>1</sup> Robert Lansing, *The Big Four and Others of the Peace Conference* (Boston, 1921), p. 163. T. E. Lawrence, writing in 1916, made the following favourable comments on Faysal: 'Is tall, graceful, vigorous, almost regal in appearance. Aged thirty-one. Very quick and restless in movement. Far more imposing personally than any of his brothers, knows it and trades on it. Is as clear-skinned as a pure Circassian, with dark hair, vivid black eyes set a little sloping in his face, strong nose, short chin. Looks like a European, and very like the monument of Richard I, at Fontenay. He is hot-tempered, proud and impatient, sometimes unreasonable, and runs off easily at tangents. Possesses far more personal magnetism and life than his brothers, but less prudence. Obviously very clever, perhaps not over scrupulous. Rather narrow-minded, and rash when acts on impulse, but usually with enough strength to reflect, and then exact in judgment. Had he been brought up the wrong way might have become a barrack-yard officer. A popular idol, and ambitious; full of dreams, and the capacity to realize them, with keen personal insight, and a very efficient man of business' (*Arab Bulletin*, 26 Nov. 1916. Reprinted in A. W. Lawrence, ed., *Secret Despatches from Arabia* (London, Golden Cockerel Press, 1939), pp. 37-38).

knew how to speak and behave like a Bedouin, having himself spent his early life and his war years in the desert. He won the confidence of the leading tribal shaykhs in Iraq, and acted as a link between the tribal and the town populations. But his policy towards the tribes was more positive than merely to demand their submission to authority; he fully understood their problems, and by the distribution of land and the reorganization of the irrigation system he sought the eventual settlement of the tribes and their accommodation to agriculture.

Occupying such a unique position in the life of his country, Faysal inevitably emerged as her unrivalled national hero. It is true that as a constitutional monarch he had limited powers; but in identifying himself with Iraq's need and aspirations, he played the role of the reformer and the benevolent monarch who could call and dismiss Cabinets at his own pleasure. He was indeed criticized for concentrating as much power as possible in his own hands; but this concentration of power, in a country where the old local divisions were still very strong, was probably necessary in order to ensure the progress of Iraq. Faysal, moreover, took a moderate attitude towards the Westernization of his country. Situated between the revolutionary Kemalist and Pahlevi regimes in the north and east, and conservative Wahhabi Arabia in the south, the various religious and racial elements in Iraq could not watch these neighbouring systems with indifference. Faysal, who preferred to follow the *via media* in social change, proved to be the only stable factor in the working of a European system of government imported into a country that had not yet had the time to create sufficient cohesion among its various racial-religious elements.



## CHAPTER II

### THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT<sup>1</sup>

THE political organization of Iraq may best be understood by a discussion of the social and economic background. For the past has bequeathed to present-day Iraq serious social and economic problems which have greatly influenced the working of her Government.

From medieval times political power in Iraq (as, indeed, throughout the whole Arab world) was profoundly influenced by the social and economic structure of Arab society. The division of the population into the tribal and city-dwellers on the one hand, and the ruling and ruled classes in the city on the other, naturally gave rise to the dual rivalry between the nomads and the central authority, and between the ruling oligarchy and the masses.

To begin with, the desert area of Iraq was inhabited by tribesmen whose habitual occupation was fighting. When the caliphs were strong enough to wage *jihad* (holy war) against the neighbouring non-Muslim countries, the tribesmen were loyal to the central authority, since their superfluous energy was directed against the external enemy and they were amply compensated by the spoils of war. But when the Muslim conquests came to a standstill, the restless tribesmen could not remain idle; they became a source of serious threat to the central authority and they often turned against the cities.<sup>2</sup> The problem which later became of great concern to the central authority was how to protect the cities from periodic tribal raids. For centuries the function of the State was reduced merely to that of raising taxes from the urban population for the maintenance of a mercenary army to protect the cities from tribal raids. During the time of the decline of the Abbasids, as well as under the Mongols, this function was

<sup>1</sup> The main substance of this chapter was published in pamphlet form in 1944 under the title *The Government of Iraq*.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that during the conference of provincial governors held in Medina in A.D. 655, on the eve of the disturbances which culminated in the revolt against 'Uthman, the third Caliph, the astute governor, 'Abd-Allah ibn-Amir, suggested that the only possible solution to avert civil war was to start fresh campaigns against non-Muslims.

inherited by feudal lords of the various provincial administrations.<sup>1</sup> The policy of the Ottoman Turks, from the seventeenth century to the middle of the nineteenth, was one of 'tribe-smashing' and thus it aggravated the tension between the urban and tribal population on the one hand, and between the tribesmen and the central authority on the other.<sup>2</sup> It was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that the Ottoman Empire (during Midhat Pasha's governorship in Iraq) embarked on a policy of settlement by offering the tribal shaykhs lands for cultivation. This new policy, which helped to reconcile the shaykhs to authority, and to 'detribalize' their followers, strengthened, if it did not revive, the power of the landlords. The policy of the national Government of Iraq, while it contributed a great deal to the settlement of the tribes and the regulation of their movements, could not, especially after the death of Faysal, contribute to the co-operation of the tribal shaykhs with the central authority. The tribal shaykhs, as will be pointed out later, often revolted against the Government in defence of their feudal rights.

In the cities the population of Iraq was divided into the relatively small but wealthy class, and the wretched and exploited masses. Hundreds of thousands of them were, and still are, without home, without land, without schools, and even without personal property. They were constantly threatened by starvation and disease. The gap between them and the landlords was, and still is, so wide that those on the lowest level could never hope to reach the one above. This has resulted partly from the striking absence of an important middle class, but mainly from the wretchedness of the illiterate masses, stricken with poverty and disease. The feudal lords, whether under the Arab or the Ottoman administrations, supported authority so long as it protected their ascendancy and vested interests. The rank and file, utterly neglected, and despairing of any hope of improvement, have become a great source of unrest to the existing regime in Iraq. These masses have often revolted in the past on various pretexts such as religious differences and nationalism; but today they are attracted by

<sup>1</sup> For the rise of the feudal system in the Arab world, see A. N. Poliak, *Feudalism in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the Lebanon, 1250-1900* (London, Luzac, 1939).

<sup>2</sup> 'The result', says Brigadier Longrigg, 'was to inflame tribal Iraq to worse conditions than any remembered, to drive cultivators back to the desert, and, at the moment when modern communications were appearing, to reduce the country to the last weakness and misery' (S. H. Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq* (London, Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 290).



Communist propaganda. The real cause of their unrest is their deplorable socio-economic conditions.

Arab nationalism, which arose as a protest against the Ottoman administration, received the enthusiastic support of the lower classes because the leaders of the movement championed the cause of all Arabs against Ottoman oppression. The most enthusiastic leaders of the nationalist movement were young men who had received military training in Istanbul, and some of them came from poor families. The activities of the army officers bore fruit in the establishment of nationalist governments; but their narrow nationalist view, when they were charged with ruling the people, would not allow the more enlightened and liberal young men who emerged after the First World War to share authority with them.

The position of the moderate and liberal groups in Iraq was rendered the more hopeless by the absence of an important middle class whose interests lay between the landowners and the masses. It is true that in predominantly agricultural countries, where feudalism persisted for so long, it is not possible to expect a rapid rise of the middle class. But the mandatory Powers, who were charged by the League of Nations to advise the native Arab governments, failed to lend support to the liberal groups, because they were primarily interested in maintaining public order with the least possible expenditure of money and manpower by avoiding clashes with influential groups. These Powers have in fact even supported the feudal lords against the moderate and liberal groups. As Miss Warriner rightly stated, 'the mandatory Powers in Syria and Iraq were obliged to rely on the power of the landlords and sheikhs to a greater extent than the Ottoman Government did'.<sup>1</sup>

But this conservative policy of the Western Powers has proved to be disastrous both to their gospel of democracy and to the stability of the newly created regimes in the Arab world. For the moderate and liberal groups, failing to gain sufficient support from an infant middle class and disgusted with what they denounced as a 'reactionary' policy of the democratic Powers, gradually began to think that their future would depend on gaining the support of the working class and the rank and file of the people.

The condition of the masses in Iraq was used as a slogan by the liberal groups and certain opportunists, who championed their cause

<sup>1</sup> Doreen Warriner, *Land and Poverty in the Middle East* (London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1948), p. 23.

against the ruling oligarchy and the landlords. The new ideology which has captured the imagination of the masses, since it promises a brighter future, is Communism. It is true that these people have not grasped even the most elementary principles of this doctrine, but they have been assured by Communist propaganda that, in Marx's words, they have 'nothing to lose but their chains'.

The Iraqi Government has dealt with this threatening situation merely by arresting and punishing the leaders of the movement, but no serious attempt has so far been made to improve social and economic conditions.<sup>1</sup> These will always give an opening to Communists. At bottom the problem may be stated thus: will the Government be able to persuade or force the feudal lords to give up their privileges in favour of liberal reforms?

#### THE DRAFTING OF THE CONSTITUTION

Before studying the impact of the socio-economic conditions on the working of the Iraqi Government, a brief discussion of the origin, nature, and structure of this Government is necessary.

Until July 1958 the Government of Iraq was a parliamentary government, consciously modelled, at least in form, on the Government of the United Kingdom. The first step taken after the revolt against the British administration was to establish a provisional Government (October 1920) under the leadership of the Naqib of Baghdad, Abd ar-Rahman al-Gaylani. The provisional Government's function was to make preliminary preparations before the accession of Faysal, whose nomination for the throne had been proposed at the Cairo Conference (March 1921), and confirmed by a plebiscite in Iraq which was held in July. Faysal was proclaimed King on 23 August 1921, and this event marked the beginning of the national Government of Iraq. But though the Government was established in 1921, its constitutional organization was not completed until 1924, when the Organic Law was drawn up and submitted to a Constituent Assembly for approval.

Constitutional government had been envisaged some time before the Iraqi Government was formed. Article 22 of the League Covenant stated with regard to the former Ottoman territories placed under mandate, that their existence as independent nations could be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of 'administrative advice and assistance' by a mandatory Power until such time as they

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 362-4 below.

were able to stand alone, and the original draft mandate for Iraq, which was later replaced by a Treaty of Alliance, referred to the need for a constitution for Iraq. When the Iraqi Council of State elected Faysal King of Iraq (11 July 1921) it was decided that his Government should be a 'constitutional, representative, and democratic Government, limited by law'. King Faysal had himself declared, on his accession, that he would promulgate a constitution.

The main provisions of the constitution, however, were embodied in Article 3 of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 10 October 1922, in which it was stipulated:<sup>1</sup>

His Majesty, the King of Iraq, agrees to frame an Organic Law for presentation to the Constituent Assembly of Iraq and to give effect to the said Law, which shall contain nothing contrary to the provisions of the present Treaty and shall take account of the rights, wishes, and interests of all the populations inhabiting Iraq. This Organic Law shall ensure to all complete freedom of conscience and free exercise of all forms of worship, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals. It shall provide that no discrimination of any kind shall be made between the inhabitants of Iraq on the ground of race, religion, or language, and shall secure that the right of each community to maintain its own schools for the education of its own members in its own language, while conforming to such educational requirements of a general nature as the Government of Iraq may impose, shall not be denied or impaired. It shall prescribe the constitutional procedure, whether legislative or executive, by which decisions will be taken on all matters of importance, including those involving questions of fiscal, financial, and military policy.

It is to be noted that the foregoing Article lays down the foundation not only of a Bill of Rights for Iraq, but also the fundamental principles governing its framework of government. For this reason Article 3 of the Treaty of 1922 was an important landmark in the constitutional history of Iraq.

The drafting of the Organic Law, as well as discussions on its provisions, was more the work of the committees which prepared the draft than of the Constituent Assembly. As early as the autumn of 1921 a committee of two, Major (later Sir) Hubert Young and Mr (later Sir) Edwin Drower in consultation with Mr (later Sir) Nigel Davidson, prepared the first draft, drawing its provisions from the constitutions of Australia, New Zealand, &c.

<sup>1</sup> Great Britain and Iraq. *Treaty of Alliance signed at Baghdad, 10 October 1922. Protocol of 10 October 1922 signed at Baghdad 30 April 1923, together with Agreements of 16 October 1922, signed at Baghdad 25 March 1924. (Ratified 19 December 1924.)* Cmd. 2370 (London, H.M.S.O., 1925).

King Faysal, while accepting in principle the first draft, referred it to an Iraqi committee of three: Naji as-Suwaydi, Minister of Justice; Sasun Hiskayl, Minister of Finance; and Rustum Haydar, Secretary to Faysal. This committee objected to the first draft because it allotted too much power to the Crown. The committee prepared its own draft, drawing its main provisions from the Ottoman constitution.

The two drafts were separately sent to the Colonial Office in London, but later the two committees met, apparently on an order from London, and prepared a synthesis of the two. In this synthesis the powers of the Crown were reduced and the ministers were made responsible to Parliament, but the Crown was empowered to legislate by decrees when Parliament was not in session. The Iraqi ministers objected to this. Thereupon the synthesis was referred to London in February 1923. The Colonial Office supported the Iraqi point of view. With some minor modifications the draft was returned in April 1923. Some further slight revisions were made in Baghdad, of which the Colonial Office also approved, and the draft Organic Law was finally completed in the autumn of 1923.<sup>1</sup>

The draft Organic Law had to wait for the Constituent Assembly to be convened before it was submitted for approval. A royal *irada* (decree) was issued on 19 October, ordering elections for the Constituent Assembly to begin on 24 October 1922. The elections were at first interrupted and opposed by the Shi'i 'Ulama (religious divines), but were resumed on 12 July 1923, and finally completed on 25 February 1924. The Constituent Assembly began its work on 27 March 1924.

The work of the Constituent Assembly was mainly devoted to a discussion of the Treaty of 1922, which lasted for more than two and a half months. Discussion on the Organic Law hardly lasted a month—from 14 June to 10 July 1924. The draft Organic Law was referred to a special committee as early as 10 April 1924, which did not, however, work seriously on the draft since discussion of the treaty hardly left time to concentrate on other matters. But when suddenly and unexpectedly the Assembly proceeded to ratify the treaty, the special committee had hardly examined thoroughly more than sixteen articles.

<sup>1</sup> See Naji as-Suwaydi's statement on the work of the committees in *Mudhakarat al-Majlis at-Ta'sisi* (Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly), i. 451-4. See also P. W. Ireland, *Iraq: a Study in Political Development* (London, 1937), pp. 373-82.



It may be said that on the whole no essential modifications were made by the Constituent Assembly. It is to be noted that, on some occasions, after essential proposals had been adopted, counter-proposals were made to go back to the original draft. The proposal concerning the dissolution of Parliament with the concurrence of the Senate is a case in point. It was contended that the Cabinet should not have a free hand in the dissolution of Parliament, and consequently a proposal was made that dissolution should only be carried out with the concurrence of the Senate. The proposal was adopted and carried by the majority of the Assembly. In a later session that Article was re-examined and the original Article of the draft was reinstated.<sup>1</sup> Some modifications were agreed to, but were only concerned with minor points and were mainly verbal in character. It may be argued, however, that the draft Organic Law was carefully prepared by the various committees which had been set up to cover the preparatory work, and which did indeed save a great deal of time in the work of the Constituent Assembly. The Organic Law was approved and signed by the King on 21 March 1925, and immediately came into force.

The constitution of Iraq, if interpreted to mean all the fundamental laws dealing with the framework of the government, the distribution of authority, and the rights and obligations of the people, was more than the document known as the Organic Law of Iraq. During the mandatory period Iraq was ultimately under the control of the League of Nations. Article 22 of the League Covenant was accordingly the supreme law for Iraq as well as for any other mandated territory. From a historical point of view, therefore, the Iraqi constitution consisted of the following instruments:

- (1) Article 22 of the League Covenant.
- (2) Article 3 of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 10 October 1922.
- (3) Articles 30-36 of the Treaty of Lausanne (which deal with the nationality of the Iraqis).
- (4) The Organic Law of 21 March 1925. This has been replaced by a provisional constitutional decree (1958).
- (5) The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 30 June 1930 (the various articles dealing with Iraq foreign policy and the control of internal communications).
- (6) The Guarantees of the League of Nations.

<sup>1</sup> *Mudhakarat al-Majlis at-Ta'sisi*, i. 663-4; ii. 1071. For further examples, see *ibid.* ii. 891-2, 1014.

(7) The constitutional rules and traditions that have developed in practice or that may be adopted from foreign constitutions as provided by Article 124 of the Organic Law.

The foregoing instruments were by no means ordinary laws or statutes; they were rather 'fundamental' laws, since no legislative body had the power to alter them by the ordinary process of legislation. They could not be altered by statutes which, on the contrary, had to be enacted in a manner to conform to them. Most of these documents are now only of historical value, since their provisions have either expired or were superseded by others. Such are Article 22 of the League Covenant and Article 3 of the Treaty of 1922. Article 22 of the League Covenant ceased to be binding from the moment when Iraq became independent.<sup>1</sup> Article 3 of the Treaty of 1922 expired when the whole treaty was superseded by the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930.<sup>2</sup>

All the Iraqi constitutional instruments, including the provisional constitutional decree, were 'written', in the sense that they did not evolve, like the British constitution, but were enacted and issued at a certain specified time. They are also to be classified as rigid constitutions, in contrast to the flexible British constitution, because their provisions can only be amended by a special procedure.<sup>3</sup> The rigidity of the Iraqi constitution, however, has been slightly diminished by inserting an article in the Second Amendment Law to the effect that it was possible to adopt any constitutional practice from any foreign country by a decision of a joint session of both houses of Parliament if it were not contrary to the provisions of the Organic Law.

Three steps were specified for the amendment of the former Iraqi Organic Law. According to Article 118, 'Parliament may, within one year from the coming into force of the Organic Law, amend any of the matters of secondary importance contained therein or add to them

<sup>1</sup> It is to be noted that while Art. 22 ceased to be binding on Iraq as a mandated territory, she had become bound by the whole League Covenant as a member-State. She is now bound by the Charter of the United Nations as an original member of the United Nations.

<sup>2</sup> This treaty has also been superseded by a Special Agreement. See pp. 348-50 below.

<sup>3</sup> 'A flexible constitution', says Dicey, 'is one under which every law of every description can legally be changed with the same ease and in the same manner by one and the same body; while the rigid constitution is one under which certain laws generally cannot be changed in the same manner as ordinary laws' (A. V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, 8th ed. (London, 1923), pp. 122-3).

... provided that Parliament shall agree by a two-thirds majority of votes in both Chambers'. The period specified in this Article (i.e. 21 March 1925 to 21 March 1926), during which an amendment law was passed on 29 July 1925, may be regarded as the period of the least rigidity of the Iraqi constitution. The amendment law of July 1925 dealt only with matters of secondary importance such as the method of appointing a representative of the King during his absence outside Iraq, as well as specifying a period of four months as the maximum limit for his absence, unless Parliament decides otherwise.

After five years of its coming into force (i.e. between 21 March 1925 and 21 March 1930), the Organic Law was not to be amended at all; it was, accordingly, in a state of absolute rigidity. It is to be noted, however, that in practice four years was the only period of absolute rigidity, since Article 118 permitted amendment in matters of secondary importance within the first year of the coming into force of the Organic Law. The five-year period had also expired and in practice only one more procedure was left for amendment.<sup>1</sup>

From 21 March 1930 to 14 July 1958 the procedure for amending the Organic Law, under Article 119, was as follows:

Every amendment must be approved by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate by a majority comprising two-thirds of the members of each Assembly. After it has been approved the Chamber of Deputies will be dissolved and a new Chamber elected. The amendment adopted by the dissolved Parliament will be submitted to the new Chamber of Deputies and to the Senate a second time, and if it receives the approval of both Assemblies by a majority comprising two-thirds of the members of each Assembly it shall be submitted to the King for confirmation and promulgation.

In 1943 the Iraqi Organic Law was again amended by the Second Amendment Law of 27 September. The new provisions of this law, as inserted in the body of the constitution, will be dealt with in the following sections of this chapter, but the circumstances and the procedure followed in the process of amendment will be fully discussed in Chapter XII.

The other constitutional instruments, being international in character, were modified or changed through the usual diplomatic channels by agreement between the parties concerned.

<sup>1</sup> In the course of the debate on this article in the Constituent Assembly it was stated that the period of absolutely rigidity was adopted in order to prohibit any change in the constitution during the duration of the Treaty of 1922, as revised by the Protocol of 1923. See *Mudhakarat al-Majlis at-Ta'sisi*, ii, 988.

#### FROM A MONARCHICAL TO A REPUBLICAN SYSTEM

The monarchical system in Iraq was instituted before the Organic Law was drafted. It was predetermined by Arab tradition and by British support for the Hashimi family and for the monarchical system.<sup>1</sup> The monarchy of Iraq was defined in a decision made by the Provisional Government on 11 July 1921, which declared that it should be 'constitutional, representative, and democratic'. The Organic Law confirmed the establishment of the monarchy, but added, 'sovereignty belongs to the nation, and is entrusted by the people to King Faysal, son of Husayn, and after him to his heirs'.<sup>2</sup>

The King attained his majority on reaching his eighteenth year. In the event of the throne passing to a person below that age, the King's prerogatives were to be exercised by a Regent, chosen by the former King, until such time as the King attained his majority. Parliament had to approve this appointment. 'Should Parliament not approve, or should the former King fail to appoint a Regent, the Regent shall be appointed by Parliament.'<sup>3</sup> The King was safeguarded and was not responsible.<sup>4</sup> He was the supreme head of the State and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. He confirmed laws, ordered their promulgation, and supervised their execution. He could also proclaim martial law, subject to the conditions of the Organic Law. He issued orders for the holding of general elections and for the convocation of Parliament. He opened Parliament, adjourned, prorogued, and dissolved it. When Parliament was not in session the King issued ordinances with the concurrence of the Council of Ministers for the maintenance of public order and expenditure of public money not provided by the budget. These ordinances had the force of law, provided that they were not contrary to the provisions of the constitution, and were laid before Parliament at its first session.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There was a small section of the people who supported a republic. The idea, however, was not encouraged.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 19. In Art. 20 it is stated that the heir apparent should be the eldest son of the King in a direct line.

<sup>3</sup> Art. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Art. 25. This Article is an expression of the doctrine of the perfection of judgement in English Constitutional Law. 'The King', says Blackstone, 'is not only incapable of doing wrong, but of thinking wrong.' The necessary result is that responsibility has been shifted to the King's Ministers, since they counter-sign his orders. The position in England is, as Thiers said, that 'the King reigns but does not govern'.

<sup>5</sup> Art. 26. 'If Parliament does not confirm the ordinances, the Government shall notify the termination of the operation thereof, and they shall stand repealed from the date of such notification.'



The King had the power to select the Prime Minister, and appoint the other ministers on his recommendation. In practice the selection of a Prime Minister by the King was made only after consultation with a number of former Prime Ministers and ministers. According to the Second Amendment Law of 1943 the King was empowered to dismiss the Prime Minister 'if public interest renders it necessary to do so'.

The King, on the recommendation of the Cabinet, appointed the members of the Senate. He exercised his powers by means of royal *iradas*. They were issued on the proposal of the responsible minister or ministers, with the concurrence of the Prime Minister, and were signed by them. The coup d'état of 1958 abolished the monarchy and declared Iraq a republic. According to the provisional constitution, the powers of the President have been temporarily invested in a Council of Sovereignty composed of three members, one of them to act as its President.

#### THE CABINET

The Cabinet is made up of the Prime Minister and a number of other ministers. In the previous constitution the number of ministers was not to be less than seven, including the Prime Minister.<sup>1</sup> A number of deputy ministers and ministers without portfolio were appointed when there was a need for them. All members of the Iraqi Cabinet were members of Parliament. If a person appointed a minister was not already a member of Parliament, he could not retain his position longer than six months, unless he was in the meantime appointed a senator or elected deputy.

The Cabinet was responsible for the conduct of public affairs, and the ministers were jointly responsible to the Chamber of Deputies for all the acts of the Cabinet as well as individually responsible for the policies of their own ministries. If the Chamber passed a vote of no confidence in the Cabinet, the Cabinet had to resign. If the resolution in question related to one minister only, this minister had to resign.

The Cabinet met once or twice a week under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, and all its decisions were submitted to the King for approval before they were carried out.

#### PARLIAMENT

Legislative power in Iraq was vested in Parliament and the King. Parliament was composed of two houses, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.

<sup>1</sup> Art. 64.

Members of the Senate might not exceed one-fourth of the total number of the Chamber of Deputies. They were appointed by the King from among Iraqis who were prominent in public life and had served their country with distinction.<sup>1</sup> A senator might not be less than forty years of age. The term of membership was eight years, and a former senator could be appointed again.<sup>2</sup> A senator (like a deputy) could, with the approval of the Senate, 'be deputed to undertake important duties in the service of the State, for a period not exceeding two years'.<sup>3</sup> The Senate met and adjourned at the same time as the Chamber of Deputies.

The Chamber of Deputies was an elected and representative body composed on a basis of one deputy for every 20,000 male inhabitants. The deputies might not be less than thirty years of age and were elected according to an Electoral Law by direct election through a secret ballot. The term of the Chamber of Deputies was four ordinary sessions, each session of one year, beginning on 1 December. The duration of each annual session was six months, the other six being a parliamentary vacation.

The right of suffrage was not universal because women did not vote; but it was universal 'manhood' suffrage. Any person was eligible to vote who (1) was an Iraqi subject, (2) had completed his twentieth year, (3) had not lost his civil rights, (4) had not been convicted of any crime whatsoever or of a misdemeanour affecting his honour (such as theft, bribery, misappropriation, forgery, fraud, &c.), (5) was not a lunatic or mentally defective, (6) was not an undischarged bankrupt, (7) had had no order of inhibition passed against him which had not been released.<sup>4</sup> Deputies were elected for a term of four years and were eligible for re-election. Until 1935 the number of deputies was 88 (including 8 deputies representing the Christians and Jews), but the number was increased to 108 in 1935, and to 118 in 1943. Under the Electoral Law of 1946 the number of Christian and Jewish deputies was raised to 12; 6 for each community; but under the electoral decree of 1952 Jewish representatives were dropped owing to the exodus of Jews in 1950-1. The total number of deputies was 135 before Parliament was suppressed.

Legislation could be initiated in the Chamber of Deputies or

<sup>1</sup> Provided they were not relatives of the King, who were also not eligible to be deputies.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Art. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Soldiers and policemen serving under arms did not participate in the elections, but if they were on leave in their localities during the election they could participate.



proposed by the Government.<sup>1</sup> Any deputy, if supported by ten of his colleagues, could propose legislation, except such as concerned financial matters. If the proposal was accepted by the Chamber, it was sent to the Cabinet in order that a draft law might be prepared. If it were rejected it might not be reintroduced during the same session. A draft law received in one of the Chambers was, as a general rule, referred after the first reading to one of the standing committees for examination and report.<sup>2</sup> Fundamental amendments were frequently recommended by the committee and usually accepted by the Chamber at the second reading of the draft law. Draft laws which were prepared by the Government had to be submitted to either one of the two Houses; if passed, they were presented to the other.<sup>3</sup> The Budget Law was always submitted to the Chamber of Deputies by the Minister of Finance. A draft law twice rejected by the one house, but insisted upon by the other, was put before a joint assembly and had to be accepted by a two-thirds majority.<sup>4</sup> Draft laws were passed article by article, and then again as a whole; but each house might resolve that it was enough to decide on the draft as a whole only, in which case the members had the right to discuss the articles.<sup>5</sup> Draft laws, when passed by both houses, became laws only after having been confirmed by the King.

Every member of Parliament had the right to put questions to and demand explanations from ministers. Meetings of both houses were open to the public unless one minister, or four senators, or ten deputies requested that the debate should be *in camera*.

Members of Parliament had absolute freedom of speech and enjoyed parliamentary immunity. They were not liable to arrest, nor could they be brought to trial while Parliament was in session, unless they had been arrested while committing a crime, or the house of

<sup>1</sup> The Senate could not initiate legislation. It endeavoured to obtain this right in 1926, but the proposal was rejected.

<sup>2</sup> There were various standing committees both in the Senate and in the Chamber of Deputies. At the beginning of every session the following committees were elected: Petition Committee, Committee on Administration, Military Committee, Finance Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee, Economic Committee, Legal Committee, and Education Committee. A minister was allowed to attend the meeting of the committee which examined draft laws related to his ministry, but he was not allowed to be a member of or to vote in any standing committee.

<sup>3</sup> In practice draft laws were submitted first to the Chamber of Deputies and then to the Senate.

<sup>4</sup> By a request of the Prime Minister or any minister a draft law might be submitted at a joint assembly, but in order to be accepted it required a two-thirds majority.

<sup>5</sup> Art. 55.

which they were members had passed a resolution requiring their arrest.

#### CONTROL OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

Foreign relations were conducted in the name of the King. He appointed and dismissed all diplomatic representatives, concluded treaties (subject to the approval of Parliament), and declared war, subject only to the consent of the Cabinet. Conclusion of peace treaties had to be approved by Parliament.<sup>1</sup>

On 7 September 1927 the Cabinet passed a resolution to the effect that 'International agreements of minor importance or of a scientific nature and not concluded between the heads of States concerned, but between high officials of the governments of such States, need not of themselves be submitted to Parliament. . . . ' Thus agreements of limited scope were concluded by the executive alone.

There were, however, some international obligations which qualified the King's powers with regard to foreign relations. Under the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 30 June 1930 Iraq was bound to have 'full and frank consultation with Great Britain in all matters of foreign policy' but this treaty ceased to operate in 1955. Iraq was also bound by the declaration which the Iraqi Prime Minister, on behalf of his Government, accepted, as embodied in the report of the League of Nations Council Committee of 9 May 1932. The declarations embodied the so-called Seven Guarantees which a mandated territory had to accept before the termination of the mandate, including respect for minority rights, the privileges and immunity of foreigners, all obligations assumed by the former mandatory Power, and any rights acquired during the mandatory regime.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, Iraq was a member of the League of Nations from 3 October 1932, and was an original member of the United Nations and of the Arab League. Iraq was also bound by a score of treaties with neighbouring countries as well as European and Eastern countries, which regulated her foreign relations.

#### THE ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

Under the Ottoman administration Iraq was divided into three *vilayats* (provinces), each governed by a *vali* (governor), who was

<sup>1</sup> Art. 28.

<sup>2</sup> For text of the Seven Guarantees see League of Nations, *Official Journal*, 1931, pp. 2057-8; and for text of the declaration *ibid.*, July 1932, pp. 1347-50.



directly responsible for his administration to Istanbul. The three *vilayats* were: Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra. Each *vilayat* was subdivided into *sanjaqs* (districts), governed by a *qa'immaqam*, who was responsible to the *vali*.

After the establishment of the Iraqi Government a new administrative system, based partly on the Ottoman system, was set up. In 1927 a law was passed which divided Iraq into fourteen *liwas* (divisions) each governed by a *mutasarrif*. The *mutasarrif*, who represented the central Government in the *liwa*, was responsible to the Minister of the Interior. He was assisted in the administration of the *liwa* by an Administrative Council. Every *liwa* was subdivided into a number of *qada's*, administered by a *qa'immaqam*. Every *qada'* was also subdivided into a number of *nahiyas*, administered by *mudirs*. The *mutasarrif* supervised the entire administration of the *liwa*. The *mudir* was responsible to the *qa'immaqam*, and the latter was responsible to the *mutasarrif*.

Municipal affairs were administered by means of a municipal council for every city or town, elected by the people and presided over by a mayor who was appointed by the Minister of the Interior and was responsible to him for the affairs of the municipality.

#### THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The judicial system of Iraq was designed to be free from interference by any other agency. The judicial agreement, supplementary to the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 30 June 1930, stipulated that a number of British judges were to be employed by the Iraqi Government in order to ensure the just administration of law in the country. It was owing to the existence of this agreement that the 'Capitulations' inherited from the former Ottoman Empire were finally abolished.

'The Courts shall be free from interference in their affairs.'<sup>1</sup> Thus the constitution recognized, at least in principle, the doctrine of the separation of powers (so far as concerns the independence of the judiciary), as in every other modern State, in order to ensure justice. 'Every trial shall be held publicly, unless there is some legally prescribed reason for holding it in secret. The judgments of the Court and the proceedings during trials may be published unless they relate to secret sittings.'<sup>2</sup> The judges were appointed by the King upon the

<sup>1</sup> Art. 71 of the Organic Law of 1925, and Art. 23 of the Provisional Constitution.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 72 of the Organic Law and Art. 24 of the Provisional Constitution.

nomination of the Minister of Justice, who was in turn assisted by a selection Committee, and they were 'not to be removed except in the circumstances mentioned in the special law dealing with the conditions governing their qualifications, appointments, grades, and the method of their dismissal'.<sup>3</sup>

There were three types of courts in Iraq. They were: (1) civil courts, (2) religious courts, (3) special courts.

The jurisdiction of the civil courts extended to all matters of civil, commercial, criminal law, and actions for or against the Government (with the exception in each case of matters which came within the jurisdiction of the religious courts).

The religious courts included the *Shari'a* courts, whether Sunni or Shi'i, which dealt with the personal status of the Muslims and the administration of *awqaf* (pious foundations), and the Spiritual Councils of the Christians, Jews, and other religious communities, which dealt with matters relating to marriage, dowry, divorce, &c., and other matters of personal status of non-Muslims. The religious courts administered justice in accordance with the religious laws or traditions such as the *Shari'a* (Islamic law) or Christian and Jewish religious tenets. The *Shari'a* courts followed the rules of the *Shari'a* peculiar to each Islamic sect, and the *qadi* (judge) was a member of the sect to which the majority of the inhabitants of the place to which he was appointed belonged.<sup>4</sup> Both Sunni and Shi'i (or Ja'fari) *qadis* were to be found in the cities of Baghdad and Basra.

The special courts, which were usually set up only when necessity required, were the following:

1. The High Court, composed of eight members, excluding the President. These were elected by the Senate and appointed by the King, four from among the senators, and four from the judges of the Court of Cassation or other senior judges. The High Court was called 'to try ministers and members of Parliament for political offences connected with their public duties'; to try judges of the Court of Cassation;<sup>5</sup> and 'to decide matters connected with the interpretation of laws, and their conformity with the constitution'.<sup>6</sup> Thus the Iraqi High Court, like the Supreme Court of the United States, was the only agency that could declare a law to be unconstitutional, but while

<sup>3</sup> Art. 68 of the Organic Law.

<sup>4</sup> Art. 77.

<sup>5</sup> An accused person is declared guilty by a majority of two-thirds of the court and the judgment is final (Art. 85).

<sup>6</sup> Art. 81.



the latter sits permanently to accomplish such function, the former could only decide when called to do so.

2. The Special Court (*Diwan Khas*) was constituted at the request of a minister, and its members were selected according to a special law (three of them from the judges of the Court of Cassation and three from the senior military officers, when the matter was connected with the army, or three from the senior administrative officials). The purpose of the court was to deal with the interpretation of laws (other than those for the purpose of the High Court) or regulations to decide whether they contravened the law on which they were based. Decisions of the *Diwan Khas* were by a two-thirds majority.

3. Special courts or committees for dealing with certain military offences, tribal disputes (in accordance with tribal custom as provided by a tribal law), disputes between Government officials and the Government, and disputes relating to the possession or boundaries of land. Courts martial, as provided in Article 120 of the Organic Law, were also established as special courts in an area which was proclaimed in danger or where there were disturbances.

(The application of the existing laws and regulations may be suspended by the proclamation declaring martial law in force, in such places and to such extent as may be prescribed in such proclamation, provided that those charged with the execution of the proclamation shall be subject to the legal consequences of their acts, until a special law has been passed by Parliament exempting them therefrom.)

(While the Iraqi judicial system has so far been sound in principle, certain practices have been criticized by a number of Iraqi lawyers, such as the failure to ensure the independence of the system from the influence of the executive. The Minister of Justice, who had no direct influence over the judges, might exercise certain indirect influence mainly by means of transfer or by delegating certain judicial powers to Government officials. There were also complaints with regard to certain abuses in the orders of arrest, in investigations, and in the relatively high expenses of the judicial process, disproportionate to the general standard of living in the country.<sup>2</sup>)

#### WORKING OF THE GOVERNMENT

(On 21 March 1925 the Organic Law was promulgated, but an established monarchy and a Council of Ministers had been in

<sup>1</sup> Art. 120.

<sup>2</sup> See Husayn al-Jamil, 'al-Qada' al-Iraqi', *ar-Rabita*, 28 Apr. 1945, pp. 552-4.

existence since 1921. To complete the form of a parliamentary government it only remained to order the elections to begin. The election of deputies was completed in June, and the senators were appointed in July 1925. The first Parliament met on 16 July 1925, in a special session, since the Organic Law then stipulated that the ordinary session of Parliament must begin on 1 November and last for four months.)

Since the establishment of the monarchy three sovereigns have sat on the throne of Iraq: King Faysal I (23 August 1921-8 September 1933), King Ghazi I (8 September 1933-4 April 1939), and King Faysal II (4 April 1939-14 July 1958). On the death of Ghazi, the Crown Prince was only five years old. Thereupon Amir Abd al-Ilah was appointed Regent until King Faysal II reached his majority in 1953. (From the establishment of the Iraqi Government in 1921 up to the termination of the mandate in 1932 Iraq had fourteen Cabinets, including the Provisional Government of 1920. From 1932 until the time of writing (October 1958) Iraq has had another forty-five Cabinets, which makes in all fifty-nine during thirty-seven years. In other words, Iraq has had an average of one new Cabinet every eight months.<sup>1</sup> This frequency in the change of Iraqi Cabinets was considered by M. Orts, a member of the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations in 1930, as possible evidence of incapacity for self-government. The British accredited representative, Major Hubert Young, while admitting that Cabinets changed too frequently, could not agree that this was evidence of political incapacity. It only meant, he said, that the public in Iraq have never appreciated the benefits of the mandatory regime. Each Government as it took office and attempted to reconcile itself to this regime was attacked for its inability to attain complete independence and gave way to the opposition to let them see if they could do better.<sup>2</sup> While admitting the disadvantages of the system, Major Young saw in it the compensating feature that a larger number of individuals had the opportunity of obtaining parliamentary experience. He then qualified his statement by adding that each new Cabinet was not necessarily composed of new individuals, for some of them 'appear again and again, though sometimes on different sides'.<sup>3</sup> Major Young's statement

<sup>1</sup> For a table of the Iraqi Cabinets see Appendix II.

<sup>2</sup> League of Nations, *Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission*, 19th Sess., Nov. 1930, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> General Nuri as-Sa'id, who had been nine times Prime Minister, aptly remarked: 'With a small pack of cards, you must shuffle them often.' The statement



may be substantiated by the fact that in the first thirteen Cabinets which were formed (until the end of the mandate) only forty-six different individuals held office as ministers. In the total fifty-nine Cabinets the number has come very near to 150.

The reason why the frequency of Cabinet changes increased after Iraq's rise to statehood is to be found in the lack of solidarity among the members of almost every Cabinet, the acute competition among politicians, the absence of political parties which could have offered legal channels for political strife, and the interference of the army in politics.

Parliament has met regularly since 1925. The original senators nominated in July 1925 remained in office until June 1929, when lots were drawn for the retirement of half of their number.<sup>1</sup> Five of the retired members were reappointed, and four new senators were added. In 1933 the remaining original senators retired, having completed their term of eight years. Since 1933 half the senators have retired regularly every four years. As to the Chamber of Deputies, there have been so far fifteen different Chambers elected; the first in 1925, the second in 1928, the third in 1930, the fourth in 1933, the fifth in 1934, the sixth in 1935, the seventh and eighth in 1937, the ninth in 1939, the tenth in 1943, the eleventh in 1947, the twelfth in 1948, the thirteenth in 1952, the fourteenth and fifteenth in 1954. The ninth and the thirteenth Chambers were the only two which completed their term of four years. At the first election there were some people who were reluctant to enter Parliament, but at the second election candidates were far more numerous and showed themselves willing to get seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Tribal shaykhs as well as city-dwellers were represented; indeed it has always been the complaint of the city-dweller that the tribal shaykhs were over-represented. Another criticism often made by the city-dwellers was that the elections in the country were rigidly controlled by the Government, so much so that the Government nominees were always elected deputies. This tendency had manifested itself in the cities as well, and thus Parliament had been subordinated to the executive and lost its earlier spirit of opposition. Control of the elections and frequent dissolution of Parliament rendered Parliament completely

is quoted by Wendell Willkie (without mentioning General Nuri) in his *One World* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1943), p. 19.

<sup>1</sup> Under Art. 22 of the Organic Law (before the Second Amendment), half of the first appointed Senate must retire by lot to make possible the retirement of half the Senate every four years.

at the mercy of the Cabinet and incapable of passing a vote of no confidence in any of the fifty-nine Cabinets.

#### POLITICAL PARTIES

From the very establishment of the Iraqi Government there was keen interest in organizing political parties along Western European lines in order to develop a democratic form of government. Two political parties were already in existence under the Ottoman regime, the Ahd and Haras al-Istiqlal, which aimed at defending Arab rights against the Turks. After the accession of Faysal to the throne in 1921, three new main parties were established: (1) the Watani (National) Party, led by Ja'far Abu 't-Timman; (2) the Sha'b (People's) Party led by Yasin al-Hashimi; and (3) The Taqaddum (Progressive) Party, led by Abd al-Muhsin as-Sa'dun. These three parties had essentially the same objective, that is, the termination of the mandate and winning of independence. They differed only in means of achieving that objective, not on social or economic issues. The Taqaddum was dissolved when Sa'dun committed suicide.

In 1930 when General Nuri as-Sa'id concluded the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, a regrouping of parties immediately followed. General Nuri formed the Ahd Party (reviving the pre-war Ahd), whose aim was to carry into effect the Treaty of 1930 and to bring the mandate to an end. The treaty was regarded by rival politicians, such as Yasin al-Hashimi and his followers, as unsatisfactory for the realization of the national aspirations of Iraq. Former members of the Sha'b and Watani parties came together and organized the Ikha' al-Watani (National Brotherhood) Party. The leader of the Ikha was Yasin al-Hashimi and the most prominent members were Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, Hikmat Sulayman, and Muhammad Zaki. The Watani Party, while officially remaining as a separate party, was in close alliance with the Ikha for the purpose of opposing the Treaty of 1930. Like former parties, these new parties also aimed at achieving the independence of Iraq, and the only differences among them were on the means of effecting this.<sup>1</sup>

After the winning of Iraq's independence in 1932 the Ahd Party was dissolved. The other two parties, though they survived after 1932, lost their purpose and were dissolved in 1934 and 1935

<sup>1</sup> For a brief account of political parties see Fritz Grobba, *Irak* (Berlin, 1941), pp. 40-47.



respectively. Thus all the political parties died natural deaths since their *raison d'être* had disappeared.

Shortly after Iraq won independence the leading politicians were invited by King Faysal to discuss the possibility of forming new parties on the basis of domestic issues, but Faysal's death postponed any action. After his death, leadership devolved upon the politicians who formed his entourage and the need for parties was even more pressing. But no new parties were organized until 1946, and the leading politicians made use of local conditions, at suitable opportunities, to achieve power.<sup>1</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

It is to be noted that the form of the Iraqi Government, as provided in the constitution, was democratic; but there were many local forces which affected the working of the Government. The form was determined by the impact of Western ideals; the disruptive forces were to be found in the existing socio-economic conditions. Those local conditions, as has been seen, were inherited by Iraq from the past. The Iraqi Government before the 1958 coup d'état, therefore, was the outcome of a conflict between the form and the forces arising from local conditions. A conflict of this sort inevitably led to an adaptation of the form; but such an adaptation, if it is to lead to progress, should not entirely sacrifice the form to satisfy existing local conditions. These local conditions could be gradually modified by developing new traditions influenced by the form. But such a process of adjustment naturally needs wise and balanced leadership in order to maintain the equilibrium necessary for a healthy adjustment.

Up to the end of the mandate the leaders of Iraq, guided by Faysal and advised by the mandatory Power, were able to initiate a process of adjustment which gave every promise of progress. When the mandate came to an end there were grounds for confidence that the progress of the Iraqi Government was ensured. Judged by relative standards, Iraq possessed a modern form of government, a well-guided public opinion, and civil servants learning by experience and growing in efficiency. Above all there was the wise leadership of Faysal, who inspired public spirit in every department of Government.

The rapid progress of Iraq, however, was interrupted suddenly and unexpectedly; it was Iraq's misfortune that the career of King Faysal was cut short in 1933. With his death a period of disequilibrium

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the revival of political parties see pp. 299 ff., below.

followed. Personal differences among the politicians became more acute, and there was no Faysal to effect a compromise, or to maintain the link between the tribes and the town population.

On the death of Faysal, his son, Ghazi, then only twenty-one years old, came to the throne. During his short reign (1933-9) Iraq lacked the leadership which was necessary for stability and progress. After the termination of the mandate Iraq was more than ever in need of the type of leadership which Faysal had provided so that a balance could be maintained between the form of government and local conditions, without which there can be no progress in Iraq. After Faysal's death, and while his successors were still young and inexperienced in public affairs, leadership devolved on a group of politicians who had formerly surrounded Faysal. It would have been possible for the politicians to handle the situation through political parties. But political parties virtually did not exist, since all of them, it will be recalled, died natural deaths after the termination of the mandate.

It is interesting to speculate on the prospects of parliamentary government in the Middle East. The subject has been discussed by a number of publicists and critics. Lord Cromer, writing on Egypt in 1908, asserted that 'the Legislative Assembly has, in practice, turned out to be the least useful and efficient. It was, and still is, too much in advance of the requirements and political education of the country. No real harm would be done if it were simply abolished.'<sup>1</sup> More recent writers, not less pessimistic than Lord Cromer, have held almost the same views. One official in Palestine declared to an American scholar: 'In . . . countries like Transjordan and Iraq, you can set up a native government, give them advice, and let them go. But if you want progress, you must have direct administration.'<sup>2</sup> The late Syrian nationalist Dr Shahbandar, while admitting the value of parliamentary government for a country under foreign control as a means of limiting interference, contended that more rapid progress could be made only under a benevolent ruler.<sup>3</sup>

More recent opinions are less pessimistic in tone and are more favourable to democratic institutions in the Middle East. In discussing

<sup>1</sup> E. Baring, 1st Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (London, Macmillan, 1908), ii. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Quincy Wright, 'The Government of Iraq', *American Political Science Review*, Nov. 1926, p. 761.

<sup>3</sup> 'Abd ar-Rahman Shahbandar, *al-Qadaya al-Ijtima'iya al-Kubra* (Cairo, 1936), p. 93.



the question of terminating the Iraq mandate by the Permanent Mandates Commission, it was asserted by Great Britain that 'Iraq is a self-governing State . . . equipped with stable legislative, judicial, and administrative systems, and all the working machinery of a civilized government'.<sup>1</sup> M. Orts, a member of the Permanent Mandates Commission, endorsed that statement and added that 'Iraq possessed all the political and administrative machinery of a State, and that in its constitution were embodied the principles on which the majority of modern constitutions were based, were facts which the Mandates Commission could affirm, seeing that they were within its field of observation'. M. Orts wanted only 'to know whether there existed in the country that spirit which animated these institutions and was the essential condition for their working'.<sup>2</sup> Sir Francis Humphrys, the British accredited representative, replied that the best answer could be found in the *Special Report*, pp. 11-12, in which it was stated:

. . . throughout the period under review a definite political impulse is evident behind all these changes. On the part of all responsible Iraqis there has been from the first a marked impatience of mandatory control and a fervent desire for independence. These are to be ascribed, not to ingratitude nor to lack of appreciation of the efforts of the mandatary and the League of Nations on behalf of Iraq, but to a growing national consciousness which will not be satisfied until the country is free from foreign control. This desire for independence which has found expression in continual pressure for a relaxation of mandatory control, is not in itself an unhealthy sign. It demonstrates, at least, that Iraqis generally are willing and eager to accept the burden and responsibilities on their behalf. The question of the capacity of Iraqis to assume these responsibilities is examined later in this report; but the fact that the desire to do so is present throughout Iraq is in itself evidence of a keen national spirit, without which the grant of independence would be as unprofitable as it would be unmerited.

In a country like Iraq, where the force of the old local traditions is still strong, it was not expected that the working of democratic institutions would admit of comparison with older Western countries accustomed to democratic traditions. The regime which has been declared abolished by the coup d'état of 1958—at least some of its features have in practice been suspended—would undoubtedly have

<sup>1</sup> G. B., Colonial Office, *Special Report by H.B.M.'s Government to the Council of the League of Nations on the Progress of Iraq during the period 1920-31* (London, H.M.S.O., 1931), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> League of Nations, *Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission*, 20th Sess., p. 133.

been able to carry out a plan of reform in a more liberal, tolerant, and sympathetic spirit than that shown by the present Government; but the new generation has always been impatient with the slow and inadequate progress made by their country through democratic procedures. The conflict that ensued between the elder politicians and the new generation after the Second World War became so acute that changes in government were bound to take violent form. The coups d'état of 1948 and 1952 seemingly failed to impress the elder politicians with the gravity of social conditions which gave an opening for the army again to interfere in politics and abolish the entire constitutional framework through which the elder politicians governed. Evolutionary progress, it is true, is slow by nature; but it is the safest way of achieving social change without loss of stability. Iraq's progress has often been interrupted by violent changes in the past, and it is hoped that her present rulers, in trying to carry out social reforms quickly, will not alter or completely depart from democratic procedures, thereby preventing progress in the light of past experience.



## CHAPTER III

## TRIAL AND ERROR IN SELF-GOVERNMENT

## I

1932-5

THE admission of Iraq to the League of Nations marked the end of an epoch during which King Faysal and the Iraqi nationalists had been too much preoccupied in bringing the mandate to an end to pay proper attention to internal reforms. Shortly before the mandate was formally terminated, however, Faysal began to discuss with the leading ministers a reform programme for his would-be independent country. In the light of his past experience Faysal realized that Iraq's most urgent need, after winning her independence, was social and economic progress. In March 1932 he submitted to his ministers certain proposals of reform for comments. The memorandum was manifestly the work of a man who had observed the regime with a trained eye and keen interest. He noted that Iraq, as she stood in 1932, had not yet attained that cohesion among her various racial and religious communities necessary to create a modern nation. He noted likewise that the Iraqi Government, owing mainly to lack of resources and an inefficient army, was much weaker than the people. For it was then estimated that no less than 100,000 rifles were owned by the people as against 15,000 which the Government had in its possession.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, Faysal argued, no Iraqi Government could ever carry out a programme of reform unacceptable to the people. He advised his ministers to follow a policy of moderation, avoiding radical ideas which might arouse suspicion and cause a reaction among the ignorant majority, and seeking co-operation between the Government and the masses.

Faysal realized that such an approach might not ensure rapid progress. He accordingly suggested the following procedure: (1) increasing the existing armed forces and raising their standard of efficiency to a level that would enable the army to crush any two

<sup>1</sup> The above was Faysal's estimate, but actually the number of rifles in tribal hands was much higher.

rebellions which might simultaneously arise in two different parts of Iraq; (2) the carrying out of a policy of equality between the two Islamic sects (i.e. the Sunni and the Shi'a)<sup>1</sup> and paying due respect to tribal traditions as well as to non-Islamic religions; (3) the settlement of land problems; (4) increasing the powers of the *liwa* (provincial) administrative and municipal councils; (5) opening a school for public officials which would provide efficient servants for the State on the basis of ability; (6) encouraging the infant industries of the country and starting new ones; (7) reorganizing the educational system; (8) reforming the system of government in such a way as to separate the executive from the legislative power, and reorganizing Government administration.

Faysal's proposals were favourably commented upon by his ministers. Even Naji as-Suwaydi, a former Prime Minister, who criticized a number of details, agreed with his general line of policy. Suwaydi endorsed Faysal's idea of the separation of the executive and legislative powers, and suggested that the ministers, as Government officials, should be appointed for a definite term of office in order to relieve them of legislative functions or parliamentary pressure which had often disturbed their administrative work. He also suggested amendment of the Electoral Law in order to ensure more adequate representation of the people and to put an end to the Government control of the elections.

## THE TRANSITIONAL ADMINISTRATION

When Iraq was admitted to membership of the League of Nations Faysal thought that, having achieved his immediate political objective, the time had come to carry out a policy of internal reforms. He took a hopeful view of securing the help of all leading public men and appealed to them, in the interest of their country, to forget their quarrels and co-operate in forming a strong Government, unhampered by an opposition, in order to carry out reforms effectively. He asked Nuri as-Sa'id, who had been Prime Minister from 1930 to 1932, to resign in favour of a new administration, which was to include Nuri himself and his opponents, the *Ikha' al-Watani* (National

<sup>1</sup> The Shi'a may be regarded as the most important politico-religious sect formed in the first century of the Islamic era. The starting-point for the division of Islam into the Sunni (Orthodox) and Shi'a (Partisans) was a difference on the issue of the Caliphate. The Shi'a advocated the rights of the descendants of Ali (cousin of Muhammad), but the Sunnis rejected their claims in favour of an elective system of the Caliphate.



Brotherhood) Party. General Nuri, who aspired to head the new coalition, reluctantly tendered his resignation on 27 October 1932.

The leaders of the Ikha Party had already been invited to take part in forming a new administration, but did not accept the idea of a coalition, having denounced General Nuri's treaty with England and pledged the nation never to be bound by its terms. But they were decidedly pleased to know that the way to authority was at last thrown open to them and that their popularity throughout the country had been recognized by the King. Faysal accordingly decided to form a transitional Government, composed of neutral public men, which was designed to prepare the way for a new administration to be formed on the basis of the new elections.

For this purpose Faysal invited Naji Shawkat, a young independent politician and sympathetic to his policy, to form a Government on 3 November. The members of the new Government were mainly recruited from senior civil servants, chosen to run the administration in a business-like manner rather than to lay down a new policy. Parliament was dissolved on 8 November, and the new elections were held in February 1933, in an atmosphere of indifference since no political issues were involved.<sup>1</sup> Only the Watani Party boycotted the elections, on the grounds that there were restrictions on the activities of this party and on the freedom of the press. The Ikha Party took part in the elections because its leaders had great expectations of achieving power.

The election returns, although they showed only a slight change in the composition of Parliament, were a victory for the Government. A number of seats (about 15) were given to the opposition, the Ikha Party, but the majority of deputies were either the personal followers of the Prime Minister or former deputies pledged to support the new Government. Thus Shawkat was able to muster a majority of 72—forming a parliamentary bloc—and he declared that since he enjoyed such a majority he would continue in office; thus his Cabinet ceased to be transitional.

Before Parliament met, however, Faysal expressed a desire to strengthen the Government by infusing new blood in it; but Shawkat preferred to resign rather than be dwarfed within his own

<sup>1</sup> Nuri suggested that Shawkat should not dissolve Parliament, and he offered the support of his parliamentary followers to the new Government. The Prime Minister, who had already agreed with King Faysal on dissolution, rejected the offer, generous as it may have seemed, because, as he pointed out to the writer, he suspected Nuri's intention to perpetuate his influence in the new administration.

Cabinet by such influential men as Nuri as-Sa'id, Yasin al-Hashimi, and Rashid Ali al-Gaylani. Thereupon the King persuaded Shawkat not to resign, as there was no pressing need for a Cabinet change, until he found another solution; however, he seemed to have tacitly permitted the Ikha leaders to criticize the Government in Parliament.

Parliament met on 8 March 1933, and the King read the Speech from the Throne, embodying the Cabinet's programme. When Parliament reassembled on 16 March to discuss the Speech, the Ikha members violently attacked the Cabinet's programme as devoid of any measures which would transform the administration created under the mandatory regime into one fit for a truly independent country.<sup>1</sup> This unjustified attack, Shawkat explained to the writer, greatly distressed him since he was not unwilling to hand over the seals of office to the Ikha leaders and he had remained in power until Parliament met only because the King had asked him to do so.

Soon after the meeting Shawkat requested the King to accept his resignation on the grounds of ill health, and the King, thanking him for his services, accepted his resignation on 18 March. Thus the parliamentary bloc which Shawkat had organized was broken within ten days after Parliament met, and the majority of the members gave a vote of confidence for an Ikha Government.

#### THE IKHA PARTY IN POWER

The doors were thus thrown open for the Ikha leaders to come into power. Faysal had already prepared the way by appointing one of them, Rashid Ali al-Gaylani (lineal descendant of the eleventh-century saint, Shaykh Abd al-Qadir), as Chief of the Royal *Diwan* (Palace). When Naji Shawkat resigned, Faysal invited Rashid Ali to form a new Government. Rashid consulted his Ikha colleagues and decided to accept the offer if he were allowed to negotiate with Britain for the revision of the Treaty of 1930. For the Ikha leaders, it will be remembered, had already pledged the nation never to recognize the treaty as binding if they came to power. King Faysal, who viewed the treaty as a successful bargain with England, was naturally unwilling to accept this condition. A Cabinet crisis developed, but Faysal prevailed over the Ikha leaders by appealing to their sense of patriotism and by pointing out the grave dangers that might ensue to their country if they repudiated a treaty which had just come into

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 4th Sess., 1933, pp. 6-7.



force. He deplored that his general lines of policy, which had borne fruition in the independence of Iraq, had not yet been grasped by the Ikha leaders, and went so far as to threaten to abdicate if they failed to appreciate his point of view. The Ikha leaders were so much impressed by the King's arguments that they immediately agreed to form a new Government without making any conditions. In order to escape possible disgrace for so doing, they were allowed to insert the statement in their programme that they would 'endeavour to realize the national aspirations of Iraq', a statement which was vaguely construed to mean the revision of the treaty.

The new Government was formed on 20 March 1933, with Rashid Ali as Prime Minister. Yasin al-Hashimi, leader of the Ikha Party, took the portfolio of Finance, and Hikmat Sulayman was given the Interior. For the continuity of Iraq's foreign policy, General Nuri, upon the request of King Faysal, was given the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. Rustum Haydar, former Chief of the Royal *Diwan* and Minister of Finance under Nuri, was given the portfolio of Communications and Works. The new Government, which included the leaders of opposing parties, was hailed by Naji as-Suwaydi in Parliament on 29 March as a great success. He welcomed the coalition by quoting the following verse from the *Qur'an*: 'And we will strip off whatever ill-feeling is in their breasts; as brethren one couches face to face.'<sup>1</sup>

When Parliament met on 27 March, Rashid Ali announced the programme of his Government. With regard to foreign policy, he declared that his Government would 'respect Iraq's international obligations', but pledged that it would 'endeavour to realize the national aspirations' of Iraq. The programme, promising sweeping reforms in every department of Government, stressed the exploitation of Iraq's economic potentialities and the strengthening of the army. It was an ambitious programme, typical of Iraqi practice, but impossible of accomplishment. It was approved by Parliament, but was severely criticized for its foreign policy. The Ikha leaders were reminded that 'only yesterday [they] were complaining of the injustice of the treaty', and were asked to state their reasons for the change of standpoint. Rashid Ali denied any change in the policy of the Ikha Party and assured his critics that his intention was always to try to revise the treaty.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Qur'an*, xv. 46. *Proc. Senate*, Extraord. Sess., 1933, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 4th Sess., 1933, pp. 31, 35.

The coming of the Ikha Party into power without a definite promise to revise the treaty led to a rupture of relations between the Ikha and the Watani Parties. These two parties had agreed on 23 November 1930 to oppose the ratification of the treaty and committed themselves never to support or join a Government save on the basis of revising the treaty. In spite of the declaration of Rashid Ali that his Government had not given up hope of revising the treaty, the Watani Party, dissatisfied with this pious declaration, issued a manifesto on 9 June 1933 denouncing the Ikha Government.

The loss of prestige sustained by the Ikha Government not only shook the nation's confidence in the party system, but also reopened the old standing Shi'i-Sunni controversy. Disillusioned with the Ikha administration, the Shi'is revived their agitation against what they considered to be the domination of the Sunni minority. Such an attack on the Ikha Government was damaging indeed, and the Ikha leaders could not recover their prestige until August, when they seized upon an incident—the Assyrian affair—which served to focus the attention of a divided nation on an impending 'peril'. The Ikha Party fully exploited the Assyrian incident to its own advantage. Since the King was then on a State visit to England, they were free to deal with the issue in this way. Thus by appearing as heroes who saved their country in time of trouble, the Ikha leaders became national idols.<sup>1</sup> Before discussing this affair, it will be appropriate to describe first Faysal's State visit to England.

#### FAYSAL'S STATE VISIT TO ENGLAND

Shortly after Iraq's rise to statehood, King Faysal was formally invited by King George V to visit England. This visit was designed to cement the friendly relations between Britain and her former ward on the new basis of equality and mutual interests. Faysal left Baghdad on 5 June 1933, and was invited on his way to pay a State visit to Belgium on 15 June.

<sup>1</sup> Naji Shawkat, who resigned in favour of an Ikha Government, thought at the outset that the Assyrian affair was insignificant compared with the Shi'i-Sunni controversy. In the course of a conversation with Colonel R. S. Stafford, Administrative Inspector in Mosul, he discounted the seriousness of the Assyrian incident by saying (June 1933): 'Oh, that is nothing. What really is serious is the Shi'i unrest. Perhaps you are not aware that two of the provinces on the Middle Euphrates are entirely without government and the third and most important, Diwaniyah, though it has the best *Mutasserif* in the country, is only half under control.' See R. S. Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1935), p. 162.



On 20 June King Faysal, with three of his ministers,<sup>1</sup> arrived in London, and was received with full and impressive ceremonial. King George welcomed him at Victoria Station. As the two kings passed through the streets, which were lined with troops, they were cheered by the crowds that had assembled along the route to Buckingham Palace. Shortly after his arrival King Faysal proceeded to lay a wreath of Flanders poppies on the grave of the Unknown Warrior at Westminster Abbey.

In the evening King George and Queen Mary gave a State banquet at Buckingham Palace in King Faysal's honour. After the banquet, the King proposed the health of his guest and said:<sup>2</sup>

... We welcome Your Majesty, not only as the Ruler of a country as rich in the promise of future achievements as in the glories of her illustrious past, but also as an old ally and friend.

I need not assure Your Majesty of the close and sympathetic interest with which I have watched the brilliant advance made by Iraq under Your Majesty's enlightened rule, and it is a pleasure to me to feel that your country's progress has been sustained and assisted during the last twelve years by the friendly co-operation of our respective Governments. It is my earnest hope, as I know it to be the wish of Your Majesty, that these close and fruitful relations will be maintained and strengthened in the future, to the enduring advantage of both countries. . . .

King Faysal, in thanking King George, said:

... I am happy to have this opportunity to express to Your Majesty my own gratitude and the gratitude of the Iraqi nation for the sympathy which Your Majesty has always shown for the welfare of my country, and also to voice my high appreciation of the valuable guidance and assistance which, during the past decade, my country has constantly received from Your Majesty's representatives in Iraq.

It gives me special pleasure to assure Your Majesty of the sincere friendship of the people of Iraq for the people of Great Britain, and I am confident that this friendship will strengthen and deepen with the passage of time. . . .

On the following day, 21 June, King Faysal and his ministers were entertained at the Guildhall. The Lord Mayor gave a magnificent luncheon party which was attended by King George and Queen Mary. The occasion marked the culmination of the cordial hospitality

<sup>1</sup> The three ministers were General Nuri, Foreign Minister; Yasin al-Hashimi, Minister of Finance; and Rustum Haydar, Minister of Communications and Works. Yasin and Rustum, in the meantime, represented Iraq at the London Economic Conference.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 21 June 1933, p. 16.

which was extended to King Faysal. The Lord Mayor, after receiving King Faysal and the Royal Family, gave an address which was later presented to Faysal, enclosed in a gold casket. After luncheon the Lord Mayor gave the toast of King George and Queen Mary and then proposed 'the King of Iraq'. In the course of his speech he said:<sup>1</sup>

In welcoming His Majesty the King of Iraq, we are welcoming the ruler of a country in alliance with our own. The close association between our two countries rests, moreover, not only upon the formal provisions of a treaty, but upon a firm friendship, inspired by mutual respect and identity of interests, which was founded in war and has been sustained and strengthened in peace.

His Majesty is also the Sovereign of what has been aptly described as the newest of States but the most ancient of countries. In the brief span of twelve years, under the wise guidance of His Majesty, a new State and a new nation have been brought into existence, self-reliant, prosperous, and progressive. By that achievement, His Majesty has added yet another illustrious page to the history of a country which has been the source of civilization for half the world, and we feel confident that, under his leadership, Iraq, rich in natural resources and in the sterling qualities of her peoples, will recover, and may even transcend, the great glories of her past.

We hope and trust that the spirit of friendly co-operation which today so happily subsists between Iraq and this country in the realm of politics and of commerce will, under the enlightened rule of His Majesty, be fostered and strengthened to the enduring advantage of both countries.

King Faysal, in reply, expressed his pleasure and great satisfaction at being received as an honoured guest in the City of London, saying:

... You have referred, my Lord Mayor, to the friendship of the people of Great Britain for the people of Iraq, and I am happy to be able to assure you that my people in Iraq most cordially reciprocate this good will. This friendship between the two countries was born out of common sacrifices and has been nourished by the rapid development of mutual interests.

My country has received much help in the past from Great Britain, and looks confidently for further help in the future, and I know that she will not look in vain. We need your help to develop the vast latent resources of our country, and the City of London, the birthplace of so many merchant adventurers, has never failed to appreciate the opportunities which are open to enterprise in distant lands.

The nations of the world are now gathered together in London to seek remedies for their economic ills, and I am confident that they will succeed. I am sure, too, that, with the co-operation of the City, Iraq will be able to make her own contribution to that restoration of commercial prosperity which we all so urgently desire. . . .

<sup>1</sup> For text of the address see *The Times*, 22 June 1933, p. 11.



King Faysal's State visit formally ended on 22 June, and he left Buckingham Palace for a hotel in London where he spent a few more days. He was exhausted by overwork and looked very tired during his State visit, and he had planned to spend the summer in Switzerland for reasons of health. But the Assyrian affair, which developed during his absence, not only affected his plans, but also hastened his untimely death.

#### THE ASSYRIAN AFFAIR *see 1*

While Faysal was still in London disquieting news reached him about tension that had developed between the Ikha Government and the Assyrians. He tried to intervene from London and sent cables to his ministers advising them to deal more gently with the Assyrians; but the Ikha leaders, who thought the King had come under the influence of the British Government, would not listen to him. To recover their loss of prestige in the past few months, they seized upon the opportunity by dealing promptly and ruthlessly with the Assyrian 'peril'. They were able to arouse, and then to exploit, the indignation of the entire nation against the Assyrians and the British (who were thought to have instigated the Assyrians). While the Ikha Government may not have been directly responsible for the massacre of Assyrians, which was mainly the work of General Bakr Sidqi (officer commanding the Iraqi forces in the north), Hikmat Sulayman, Minister of the Interior, declared to the writer that he had approved the general line of policy which General Bakr adopted.<sup>1</sup>

King Faysal, who was ill and needed medical treatment, returned to Baghdad on 2 August, but found the situation completely beyond his control. His intervention, which annoyed his ministers, had a further damaging effect on his health. Demonstrations, spontaneous or inspired, were taking place almost daily demanding the elimination of the entire Assyrian community. In one of the demonstrations outside the Royal *Diwan*, Amir Ghazi (who was in sympathy with the Ikha Government) and the Ikha leaders were loudly cheered by the excited crowds. But there was no reference to King Faysal. Concealing his disgust, Faysal exclaimed at what was going on outside his palace. It is reported to the writer by Ali Jawdat, then Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, that General Nuri, with his characteristic

<sup>1</sup> It is deemed outside the scope of our present study to discuss the Assyrian affair, save in so far as it affected the death of King Faysal; but the reader may be referred to the detailed account given in Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*.

disapproval of Ikha activities, replied that the whole excitement was 'inspired'.

Nor was this all. It was even hinted that Faysal would abdicate.<sup>1</sup> Certainly his self-respect and dignity had never been so severely wounded. He left Baghdad almost unnoticed on 2 September. Only members of the Cabinet saw him off, but there were hardly more than fifty people at the airport. Two days earlier there had been a crowd of several thousands cheering Amir Ghazi on his return from the ceremonial parade of the northern forces in Mosul. Faysal's tolerant spirit, however, did not let him leave his country without bidding farewell to his people. The following statement was issued on 1 September:

I am leaving Baghdad owing to the necessity for completing my convalescence, and I hope that my absence will not last for more than six weeks. I take this opportunity to express to my people my appreciation of their affection for me and for the manner in which they have maintained peace and confidence among the different sections of the community during recent events. All I have seen of the actions of my nation and Government has strengthened my hopes that we shall attain our national ideals very soon.

Relying on the assistance of Almighty God, I shall continue to do my best to serve my country and nation, notwithstanding any difficulties I may meet.<sup>2</sup>

#### DEATH OF FAYSAL AND ACCESSION OF GHAZI

Only six days after Faysal reached Berne he suddenly and unexpectedly died in the early hours of Friday morning, 8 September 1933. He had left Baghdad by air an ailing and tired man, seeking medical treatment in Switzerland. There was then, however, in the opinion of his physician, Dr Alfred Kocher, nothing to suggest the possibility of his sudden death.

The day before his death, on 7 September, Faysal went by motor-car to Interlaken, where he lunched, and was absent from his hotel about five hours. When he returned he appeared very tired. About seven o'clock he complained of palpitation of the heart and the doctor was called. After careful examination, his doctor said that the

<sup>1</sup> In an interview with the writer, Hikmat did not deny the rumour which was set on foot by the Ikha leaders, but stated that, as far as he was concerned, he sent word to King Faysal assuring him of his loyalty to the throne.

<sup>2</sup> See text in *The Times*, 1 Sept. 1933, p. 11.



King was suffering from arteriosclerosis, and that his heart was also in a very feeble condition. This, it was thought, had developed from worry about events in Iraq. The doctor decided to give him injections, and a nurse was left with him for the night. About 12.30 a.m. Faysal again complained of feeling ill, and his brother, King Ali, who had come with him, and two of his ministers, General Nuri and Rustum Haydar, were called to his bedside. When they arrived Faysal had already breathed his last, and they were unable to see their beloved King alive. General Nuri and Rustum Haydar at once cabled the sad news to Baghdad.

On Friday morning, 8 September, the people of Baghdad awoke to learn the news of Faysal's tragic death, and they were stunned. They soon realized how ungrateful they had been to a monarch who had given his life for his country. No one, was the unanimous opinion, could replace Faysal.

The Cabinet held a meeting immediately after the news was received, and two hours later Amir Ghazi, Faysal's only son, who was acting as Regent during his father's absence, was sworn in before the members of the Cabinet and proclaimed King Ghazi I. Early in the afternoon the young King drove in procession through lines of Iraqi soldiers, along the capital's main street, from the royal residence to the royal palace, where he received homage from notables and representatives of the various sections of the people.

King George V sent a message of condolence to the new King congratulating him on his accession.

At Berne the body of King Faysal was embalmed and the coffin, taken to Brindisi, was carried on board H.M.S. *Dispatch*, which arrived at Haifa on 14 September. Thousands of people had gathered, and excited persons cried 'Allah akbar! Allah akbar!' when the coffin was seen. An R.A.F. aeroplane left Haifa with the coffin for Baghdad and it arrived early on 15 September, where it was met by King Ghazi and the royal bodyguard.

The funeral procession, which was worthy of a national hero, was such as had rarely been seen for any previous Arab king. The coffin was carried to the Royal *Diwan*, and with the procession marched thousands of mourners. From the Royal *Diwan* the coffin, covered in front with a large portrait of Faysal and draped in crêpe, was carried to the tomb at Adhamiyah. Over the tomb a magnificent building was later erected which became the royal mausoleum of the kingdom.

## FALL OF THE IKHA GOVERNMENT

Upon the accession of King Ghazi Rashid Ali, in accordance with constitutional practice, tendered his resignation on 9 September. Ghazi invited him to form a new Cabinet on the same day. After Faysal's death Rashid Ali had been attacked by a number of leading politicians for the anti-British feeling he had aroused during the Assyrian affair. To appease his critics, in a speech made on the occasion of his reinstallation as Prime Minister, Rashid Ali declared that the policy of his Government would be the same as that followed by the late King Faysal; and in the meantime he made a statement to the correspondent of *The Times* on 10 September 1933, assuring the British Government of his friendly attitude, in which he said:<sup>1</sup>

The policy of Iraq under the new King would be the same as that pursued under the leadership of his revered father, the guiding motive being the maintenance of the friendship and alliance with her great ally, Great Britain. That was the policy already approved by the present Parliament and would remain unchanged.

Rashid Ali's declarations, which were intended merely for foreign consumption, produced a violent reaction among his Ikha colleagues, who feared that the Government might repudiate its former policy. In the meantime the Watani Party, which had already attacked the Ikha leaders for compromising their party principles, seized upon the opportunity and issued a manifesto on 11 September, in which the policy of Rashid Ali was denounced as 'reactionary' and inimical to the national interests.

Confronted with such opposition, Rashid Ali decided to improve the Government's position by dissolving Parliament and holding new elections. This step, which was meant to strengthen the position of the Ikha Government, proved disastrous to it. The King, advised by Rashid Ali's opponents against indulging his pro-Ikha sympathies, refused to approve Rashid Ali's request for dissolution. Hikmat Sulayman, Minister of Interior, and Muhammad Zaki, Minister of Justice, resigned in protest. To maintain the party's solidarity Rashid Ali presented his resignation on 28 October, and it was immediately accepted.

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 13 Sept. 1933, p. 12.



## MIDFA'I'S FIRST AND SECOND CABINETS

Ali Jawdat, Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, made it possible for Jamil al-Midfa'i,<sup>1</sup> a non-partisan ex-minister, to form a new Government on 9 November. Midfa'i's Cabinet was the first of a series to be formed on purely personal rather than partisan lines. It comprised General Nuri and Rustum Haydar (for Foreign Affairs and Public Works) representing one faction, and Naji Shawkat and Nasrat al-Farisi (for Interior and Finance) representing another. Midfa'i, who did not believe in party politics, declared on 14 December, at a party given to prospective supporters, that he needed no partisan support since he enjoyed the confidence of the leading members of Parliament.

Hardly had the new Government begun to work, however, than the Nuri-Haydar and Shawkat-Farisi factions opposed each other and wrecked any constructive work that might have been done. It is reported that the Minister of Interior, who had control of the press, induced a number of venal writers to abuse his colleague, the Minister of Public Works, in the most vulgar terms.<sup>2</sup> Matters came to a head on the question of the Gharraf project. Rustum Haydar, as Minister of Public Works, undertook to carry out the project in order to make possible the irrigation of a vast area around Gharraf, in lower Iraq, by constructing a dam on the Tigris. The project, which had already been approved by the Cabinet, was later opposed by the Shawkat-Farisi faction on the grounds of lack of resources, and they suggested postponement of the whole work. Haydar's enthusiasm for the project was shared by the Minister of Education, Salih Jabr; but these two men, who belonged to the Shi'i community, were accused of supporting the project because they were Shi'i, since the beneficiaries of the project would be members of that community. Haydar, supported by Jabr, threatened to resign; and when Midfa'i failed to reconcile the two factions, he tendered his resignation on 10 February 1934.

The King reinvited Midfa'i to form a new Government. Dropping the two opposing factions, Midfa'i reconstructed his Cabinet on 21 February. But the new Government, which was mainly recruited

<sup>1</sup> Ali Jawdat and Jamil al-Midfa'i began their public life as two army officers who took part in the Arab Revolt of 1916, and later served under Faysal in Syria. On the establishment of the Iraqi Government in 1921, they returned to Iraq and took an active part in politics.

<sup>2</sup> See a statement by Yasin al-Hashimi in the Chamber of Deputies to this effect. *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 4th Sess., 1933, p. 204.

from the least influential public men, proved to be too weak to command respect or to inaugurate any constructive work. There had already been a noticeable deterioration in administration, which was indeed due to the relaxation of Government control in the post-mandate period, but for which the Midfa'i Government was mainly made responsible. Dissatisfied with the conduct of the Midfa'i Government, the King expressed his desire for a Cabinet change. Midfa'i immediately tendered his resignation on 25 August.

## THE 'ALI JAWDAT CABINET

On the fall of Midfa'i, Ali Jawdat, Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, seized the opportunity to succeed him as Prime Minister on 27 August. In addition to the premiership, Ali Jawdat kept for himself the portfolio of the Interior and offered that of Defence to Midfa'i. General Nuri was given Foreign Affairs, and three months later, on 25 November, Rustum Haydar was appointed Chief of the Royal *Diwan*. It was thus that Jawdat secured for his Cabinet not only the support of General Nuri's group but also maintained his close friendship with Midfa'i.

On 30 August Jawdat announced his policy, which was, in fact, a modest programme of reform, and on 4 September the King approved his request to dissolve Parliament. Such a request, it will be recalled, was denied to the Ikha Government and led to its fall in October 1933. Jawdat, then Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, was at that time accused of advising the King against dissolution.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed to this very fact that we should trace the initial trouble which Jawdat faced as Premier, because the Ikha Party at once began to attack his Cabinet for dissolving Parliament when he had so ardently opposed its dissolution under an Ikha Government. When asked by the present writer for an explanation, Jawdat prudently but apologetically replied that a year had elapsed since Rashid Ali asked for dissolution, and that the country needed urgent reform which necessitated consulting the electorate. This pretext of appealing directly to the electorate had often been given to justify resort to dissolution. But when analysed in the light of continued rigid control of the elections, it is clear that dissolutions hardly meant anything save the replacement of opposing members of Parliament by others from among the Government's friends and supporters.

<sup>1</sup> See a statement by Muhsin Abu Tabikh in the Senate, *Proc. Senate*, 10th Sess., 1935, p. 11.



The manner in which the elections were carried out gave ample grounds for criticism. Jawdat, retorting to the criticism levelled against him in the Senate, declared that he had followed 'the same procedure as in former elections';<sup>1</sup> but the way in which these new elections were held was probably still more authoritarian, so much so that the Ikha Party was given hardly more than twelve seats in the lower house. Former elections, it is true, had often been carried out merely to fill the Chamber with nominees of the Cabinet's own supporters. But political circles were always critical of elections if the Government failed to include a number of its political opponents; more critical, indeed, when persons of considerable political importance were deliberately excluded from the Government's choice. Such persons, when omitted, were powerful enough to embarrass the party in power. The Ali Jawdat Government ignored this and created what was denounced as the least representative Chamber Iraq ever had. Among Jawdat's mistakes was the exclusion of Abd al-Wahid Sikkar from the list of nominees. Abd al-Wahid, who distinguished himself in the Iraq revolt of 1920, was one of the influential tribal shaykhs of the Diwaniya *liwa*, and, as a chief of the Fatla tribes, viewed his exclusion from Parliament as a great humiliation. He proved to be the most embarrassing opponent of the Government. Furthermore, a number of city-dwellers (mainly from Baghdad) were elected deputies for tribal districts in Diwaniya and Muntafiq, which meant a reduction in the number of tribal shaykhs in Parliament. Since those city-dwellers were Sunnis, though they were elected on purely political or personal grounds, their election was construed by the Shi'is as prejudicial to the interests of the Shi'i Middle Euphrates districts. The Ikha Party, likewise, with only twelve seats out of eighty-eight, found itself outnumbered in a Parliament crowded with Government supporters.

Ali Jawdat's handling of the elections might not have aroused such criticism if the general situation in the country were satisfactory. The Cabinet, indeed, had inherited negligence and growing dissatisfaction with Government administration after the termination of the mandate, which inevitably resulted from frequent Cabinet changes and the increasing transfer and appointment of Government officials on political grounds.<sup>2</sup> Such deterioration in the administrative system

<sup>1</sup> See *Proc. Senate*, 11th Sess., 1935, pp. 11-13.

<sup>2</sup> See a statement by Shaykh Muhammad Rida ash-Shabibi in the Chamber of Deputies on 3 Jan. 1935, *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 5th Sess., 1935, p. 9.

had been recognized by the Government and efforts were made to improve it; but the Ikha Party, focusing its attack on Jawdat, made him the scapegoat for the whole situation.<sup>1</sup> When Parliament met on 29 December 1934, the Ikha members, led by Yasin al-Hashimi and Rashid Ali, levelled a sharp attack on the way in which the elections were carried out. In the reply to the Speech from the Throne, the Senate formally expressed its verdict against the dissolution of Parliament and criticized the elections as having been 'carried out according to well-known special procedure'.<sup>2</sup> There was considerable hostility to Government in the Senate, but, according to the constitution, the upper house could not overthrow the Cabinet if it enjoyed the confidence of the lower house. In fact Parliament, since the elections had been controlled by the Government, failed to offer a peaceful channel for Cabinet changes. Opposition in the press and in Baghdad political circles, denouncing the 'tyranny' of the Jawdat Government, was easily met by rigid censorship and counter-propaganda. It was soon realized by the Ikha Party that its peaceful agitation against the Government was of no practical value.

#### ✓ TRIBAL UPRISINGS IN THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES

Failure to achieve immediate results in the towns inspired the Ikha leaders to exploit the grievances of the tribes. The ingenious idea of arousing the tribes against the Government was suggested by Hikmat Sulayman. In December 1934 Hikmat gave several dinner parties to leading Ikha members at his house in Sulaykh, situated to the north of Baghdad. These parties were turned after dinner into secret meetings, and the vigilant and restless Ikha leaders broached the idea of raising tribal revolts against the central authority. Yasin al-Hashimi, leader of the Ikha Party, was at the outset not very enthusiastic and absented himself from the Sulaykh meetings. He saw, perhaps, the futility of opposing the Government by such means, and he was personally still on good terms with Ali Jawdat. When, however, Rashid and Hikmat, who had great influence in the Diwaniya and Diyala tribes, were successfully proceeding with their plans, Yasin was finally prevailed upon to participate actively in the Ikha plot.

The Sulaykh gatherings culminated in a meeting held in Rashid Ali's house, also situated in Sulaykh, on 7 December 1934, when the

<sup>1</sup> See a statement by Rashid Ali in the Senate on 3 Jan. 1935, *Proc. Senate*, 11th Sess., 1935, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.



Ikha leaders pledged themselves in a written document to take a joint action against the Government. The document, which was held to be as binding as the *Qur'an* and was called by Hikmat the 'Holy Bible', stated that no Ikha member should accept any offer from, or come to terms with, the Government until Ali Jawdat was overthrown.

The Sulaykh plot was carried out in Diwaniya by Abd al-Wahid Sikkar. Abd al-Wahid was a long-standing member of the Ikha Party and had distinguished himself as a national leader in the revolt of 1920 against the British administration. His wealth and prestige had been greatly enhanced by his political activities, but his ambition had also drawn him into land disputes with his neighbouring tribal shaykhs. Ali Jawdat, in order to curb Abd al-Wahid's influence, was inclined to settle the land disputes in favour of Abd al-Wahid's neighbours; but this obviously increased Abd al-Wahid's eagerness to overthrow the Jawdat Government and to help the Ikha Party to achieve power. Although Abd al-Wahid's personal influence was confined to Diwaniya, he was able to extend it to the entire Shi'i community of the Middle Euphrates by championing their rights and interests, and he demanded immediate reforms from the Government.

Abd al-Wahid's rationalization of his political motives as championing the Shi'i cause reopened the whole question of Sunni-Shi'i relations. Since the matter was deemed to be essentially religious, the Shi'i leaders decided to refer it to the chief Shi'i divine of Najaf, Shaykh Muhammad Kashif al-Ghita'. Abd al-Wahid, Muhsin Abu-Tabikh, and Alwan al-Yasiri (who acted as liaison officers between the Ikha Party and the Shi'i tribal community) addressed a letter to Shaykh Ghita' on 9 January 1935, requesting him to call a conference of tribal shaykhs in Najaf, presided over by Ghita' himself, in order to discuss the question of reforms in the Middle Euphrates districts. The conference was held on 11 January and the principal Shi'i claims were discussed. Abd al-Wahid and the other Ikha shaykhs were more interested in attaining immediate political results than in achieving reforms. They accordingly argued that reforms could only be introduced after the overthrow of the Ali Jawdat Cabinet. After a long and protracted discussion the conference decided to present a petition to the King in which it was stated: (1) the present Cabinet should resign in favour of one more representative of the people; (2) Parliament should be dissolved, since the last elections were not properly carried out; (3) the laws should be respected and properly applied.

With this petition in hand, the tribal shaykhs proceeded to Baghdad

and requested an audience with the King on 14 January. They complained against the Government and requested its removal. But no change in Government was yet in sight.

Meanwhile the situation in the Diwaniya deteriorated and arms were sold and carried more frequently than ever. Tribal war-dances manifesting hostility to the Government were reported to Baghdad with increasing frequency. The rebellion had become more serious in February, and it spread over the whole area south of Hilla.

Nor was this all. The Ikha leaders were in the meanwhile engaged in inciting other tribal shaykhs in the north to stage a similar revolt against the Government. When Ali Jawdat contemplated putting down these revolts by force, Hikmat advised his friend General Bakr Sidqi, officer commanding the northern forces, not to lend active support to the Government.

Matters came to a head when eleven out of the twenty senators boycotted the meetings of their house while the tribal rebellion was raging in the Middle Euphrates. Faced with a hostile Senate and his inability to cope with the revolt, Jawdat tendered his resignation on 23 February 1935.

## CHAPTER IV

TRIAL AND ERROR IN SELF-GOVERNMENT  
II

1935-6

THE Ikha leaders were now invited to form a Government, but they refused unless the 'Ali Jawdat Parliament were dissolved. To this the King would not agree, and he asked Jamil al-Midfa'i to form a Government on 4 March 1935.

No sooner had Midfa'i assumed office than Abd al-Wahid openly denounced the new Government. With his eye on an Ikha Government, he declared he was not satisfied with a Prime Minister who was suspected to be the protégé of 'Ali Jawdat. Revolt spread like wild-fire. Abd al-Wahid's Fatla tribesmen cut roads and destroyed bridges on the Euphrates between Faysaliya and Abu-Sukhayr, and closed the main route between Diwaniya and Najaf. The Agra' tribesmen, led by Shaykh Sha'lan al-Atiya, joined hands with Abd al-Wahid and took control of a Government centre situated sixty miles south of Hilla. In the Diyala district similar troubles occurred among the 'Azza tribesmen, led by Shaykh Habib al-Khayzuran. Midfa'i's Cabinet, earnestly trying to avoid a clash with the tribes, sent only three battalions to the area of the disturbances as a show of force. But the Government's plan was soon known and the revolt became increasingly difficult to control.

In the meantime Abd al-Wahid approached Shaykh Kashif al-Ghita', who had already taken part in formulating Shi'i demands, for further support against the Government. But Shaykh al-Ghita' was at the same time approached by a number of non-Ikha tribal shaykhs, advising him to denounce Abd al-Wahid's movement since it was inspired by selfish motives. The venerable shaykh was indeed in a very embarrassing position. He was fully aware of Abd al-Wahid's political motives, but he could not turn down an appeal in favour of Shi'i rights. Thereupon, the shaykh, while not committing himself to any political faction, confined his activities to espousing Shi'i rights. A list of reforms was drawn up, which was never officially presented

to Midfa'i, but was privately circulated and caused further trouble to him. When Midfa'i resigned and the list was officially presented to the Ikha Government, it lacked the signature of Abd al-Wahid.<sup>1</sup>

Failing to achieve its objective by a display of force, the Government decided to negotiate with the rebels. Neither direct negotiations nor an appeal to the Ikha leaders to offer their good offices in the interests of the country helped to restore the situation to normal. The Ikha leaders, while they denied any complicity with the rebellion, declined to denounce its leaders publicly. This prompted Midfa'i to resort to force to crush the rebellion. The Government, moreover, passed a resolution, subject to the approval of the King, to the effect that any person suspected of threatening public safety was to be arrested.<sup>2</sup> This measure might have helped to check the rebellion if it had been introduced earlier, but it was adopted too late to ease the situation. When the Chief of the General Staff, General Taha al-Hashimi, was instructed to send reinforcements against the rebels, he reported that the Government's forces were not strong enough to cope with the situation. He stated, likewise, that since the rebellion was raised on partisan grounds, a political rather than military solution should be sought. The sincerity of General Taha's advice was seriously questioned, since he was the brother of Yasin, leader of the Ikha Party, and was therefore not in favour of a military conflict with the tribes for the sake of Midfa'i. General Taha's integrity might not have been questioned if he had not himself taken a firm stand against subsequent tribal rebellions which arose against a Government headed by none other than his brother Yasin.<sup>3</sup>

The attitude of the Senate remained adamant towards Midfa'i—the eleven senators continued to absent themselves and thus blocked legislation by Parliament. Like 'Ali Jawdat, faced with a hostile Senate, unable to crush the rebellion by force, and with a lack of initial resolve to deal with the trouble effectively, Midfa'i resigned on 16 March, having remained in power only thirteen days.

<sup>1</sup> The list of Shi'i demands was on the whole reasonable; it included such items as the increase of Shi'i deputies to be proportionate to Shi'i population in the country, the appointment of Shi'i judges, freedom of elections in the Shi'i *liwas*, freedom of the press, and reduction of taxes.

<sup>2</sup> The Midfa'i Cabinet was planning to arrest the principal Ikha leaders, who were suspected of being in league with the rebels, but the Cabinet resigned before it was able to carry this decree into effect.

<sup>3</sup> For text of an apologetic letter by General Taha defending his position, see 'Abd ar-Razzaq al-Hasani, *Tarikh al-Wazarat al-Iraqiya* (Sidon, 1940), iv, 46-48.



## THE IKHA PARTY IN POWER

Midfa'i's fall, which demonstrated that no grouping other than the Ikha could restore order, left the King with no other choice but to invite Yasin al-Hashimi, leader of the Ikha Party, to form a Government on his own terms. The new Ikha Government, which took office on 17 March, sought the co-operation of General Nuri as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and General Ja'far al-Askari, a former Prime Minister and brother-in-law of Nuri, as Minister of Defence. These two able ministers were included as a leavening in an Ikha Government and in order to ensure continuity in Anglo-Iraqi relations; Yasin shrewdly preferred to have them in his Government rather than to risk their possible opposition if left outside. The portfolios of Finance and Education were given to two Shi'i Ikha members, Ra'uf al-Bahrani and Shaykh Muhammad Rida ash-Shabibi. The portfolio of Communications and Works was given to a Kurd, Muhammad Amin Zaki.

Yasin, however, was unable to reconcile the desires of his two formidable Ikha colleagues, Rashid Ali and Hikmat Sulayman, who were both keenly interested in the portfolio of Interior. Hikmat, who flattered himself that he was the chief author of the Sulaykh plot, claimed priority; but Yasin, suspecting Hikmat's intimate relations with Ja'far Abu 't-Timman, former leader of the Watani Party, preferred to offer Hikmat the portfolio of Finance. Hikmat, who refused the office, in an interview with the present writer stated that Abu 't-Timman had advised him against accepting it. The Ikha Party suspected Hikmat's insistence on the Interior, with its control of the press and police departments, as a means to give Abu 't-Timman and his followers a free hand to propagate their 'Communist' ideas.<sup>1</sup> Yasin's initial failure to include Hikmat in his Cabinet proved to be a great blunder since Hikmat, with his genius for clandestine intrigues, eventually succeeded in overthrowing the Yasin-Rashid administration by force.

The new Cabinet, which included the leading Ikha leaders as well as Generals Nuri and Ja'far, was hailed as a strong Government. It is true that Hikmat's exclusion was regrettable, but this was probably not regarded as a serious threat to the Government. The Ali Jawdat-Midfa'i group, which had already been weakened as a result of the

<sup>1</sup> See Muhsin Abu-Tabikh, *al-Mabadi' wa'r-Rijal* (Damascus, 1938). For the rise of socialism in Iraq see Chapter V.

Diwaniya uprisings, was carefully watched. It was then deplored that the Ikha Party had achieved power only through illegal means, but it was hoped that the disturbances might come to an end since the chief instigators had got what they wanted. The Ikha leaders, however, paid heavily for their own sins when they themselves were later faced with similar uprisings. It was, indeed, not a difficult task to incite the tribes to revolt, for they were habitually prepared to rise against authority; but it was extremely difficult to control them once such a movement was set in motion.

## CONTINUED UPRISINGS IN THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES

Following the formation of his Cabinet, Yasin al-Hashimi issued a proclamation to the tribes (18 March 1935) calling on them to lay down their arms, and pledged himself to 'apply the laws of the land according to justice'. Abd al-Wahid immediately withdrew from the area of disorder and thus seemed to have been actuated merely by party considerations. During April he and his tribal shaykhs were seen driving with their arms in the main street of Baghdad, giving the obvious impression that the Ikha leaders owed their elevation to power to them. The tribal shaykhs remained in the capital throughout the month, being entertained at parties given by the Ikha leaders, but their main objective was to realize their personal interests and enhance their prestige in the eyes of their own tribesmen.

Abd al-Wahid, satisfied with an Ikha Government in power, no longer talked of Shi'i rights. But his attitude immediately aroused his tribal opponents, who denounced him as a 'hypocrite' who sought the realization of his own personal ambition to the detriment of the interests of the Shi'i community. Those tribal shaykhs whose interests and prestige were undermined by Abd al-Wahid's successful revolt began to move against the Ikha Government in the same way as Abd al-Wahid had revolted against Midfa'i. They appealed to Shaykh Kashif al-Ghita' to resume his demands of Shi'i rights as embodied in their petition, signed by all tribal shaykhs except Abd al-Wahid.

The Yasin-Rashid Government tried to induce Shaykh Ghita' to placate the tribal shaykhs by promising them to carry out reforms throughout the whole country. The venerable shaykh was thus inevitably driven into a political dispute in which he was unwilling to take part. If he intervened on behalf of the Government, giving satisfaction to Abd al-Wahid and his followers, he would antagonize

the other tribal shaykhs whom he had already supported on the question of Shi'i rights. Shaykh Ghita', accordingly, was bound to reply to the Government in a general way that he was not trying to arouse any sectarian feeling against it, while he advised the tribal shaykhs to keep Shi'i rights in mind, but refrained from inciting them to revolt. He issued a pious and ambiguous declaration in which he called on his people to maintain order, but warned them against supporting any political party, 'since political parties proved to be a drug to the West and a disease to the East'. He also warned them against falling under the influence of leaders whose sole interests were to achieve power while the mass of the people would remain poor and wretched.<sup>1</sup> The shaykh immediately afterwards withdrew from the picture, leaving the matter to lesser religious leaders, who played an important role in stirring up trouble. The Yasin-Rashid Government, nevertheless, continued to suspect the hidden hand of the shaykh, while in fact these minor religious leaders were under the influence of rival politicians and played almost the same role as those Ikha leaders who had aroused the tribes against the 'Ali Jawdat and Midfa'i Governments.<sup>2</sup>

Early in May a serious rebellion started, led by Shaykh Khawwam, chief of the Banu Izrayj tribe. He was, it is true, inspired to revolt by the Baghdad politicians; but he also feared lest the Ikha Government would reopen a land dispute in which he was involved and effect a settlement against him. He started his revolt at Rumaytha, situated on the railroad between Baghdad and Basra, and famous as the hotbed of the Iraqi revolt of 1920 against the British administration. The immediate cause of the revolt was, indeed, a trifling incident. On 6 May a certain Shi'i divine, Shaykh Ahmad Asad-Allah, was arrested on the grounds of stirring up hostility against the Government. The arrest immediately aroused Khawwam's tribesmen to revolt. Defying authority, they destroyed the railway line and occupied the *serai* (Government building) of Rumaytha. Khawwam was prompted to revolt when intelligence reached him that his movement would be supported by other uprisings of the 'Afaj and Banu Huchaym tribes. But his initial blunder was that he raised the revolt before he was assured of effective support.

<sup>1</sup> For text of the declaration see al-Hasani, *Tarikh*, iv. 76. See also A. D. MacDonald, 'The Political Development in Iraq leading up to the Rising in the Spring of 1935', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Jan. 1936, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. Senate*, 11th (Extraord.) Sess., 1935, pp. 9, 11.

The Government's reaction to the uprising was quick and firm. An army was immediately dispatched under the command of General Bakr Sidqi, who had distinguished himself as an able commander during the Assyrian uprising, and the operations against the rebels were ruthlessly conducted. Martial law was proclaimed and the rebels were called upon to surrender before fighting started. Shaykh Khawwam refused to submit, and Bakr proceeded to launch his attack with determination. Bombing from the air, especially at the centre where Khawwam was stationed, wrought havoc among the rebels, and most of them were forced to fly in panic. When completely surrounded, Khawwam fled across the river to an estate friendly to the Government where he was to enjoy but momentary asylum. He was captured by his enemies and handed over to General Bakr. On 16 May the army entered Rumaytha and the uprising came to an end. Khawwam's property was confiscated and he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

The celerity and ruthlessness with which Bakr had put down the rebellion alarmed and dissuaded other expectant tribes from joining forces with Khawwam. The Government, it is true, was in the meantime conducting negotiations with the Shaykhs of Dawalim and Albu Hasan tribes who, otherwise, would have supported Khawwam and prolonged unnecessary suffering for their tribesmen. But Bakr's quick victories prevented the spread of the rebellion.

There was another uprising going on at Muntafiq and Suq ash-Shuyukh while General Bakr was suppressing Khawwam's rebellion. The Government garrisons at Ur and Suq ash-Shuyukh were forced to surrender, the railway line was cut, and the *serai* was looted. Bakr, soon after he captured Rumaytha, proceeded southward to Muntafiq. Before he reached the area of rebellion, the tribesmen, partly from fear but mainly as a result of negotiation with the Government, declared their loyalty and offered to repair the railway line which they had cut between Nasiriya and Ur. Bakr's mission, accordingly, was reduced merely to restoring order to that area. Bakr, however, had to proceed to Suq ash-Shuyukh where another uprising was still raging. Floods slowed down his movement, but he managed to dispatch forces by the Tigris, and aerial bombardment completely paralysed any serious resistance. The army finally entered Suq ash-Shuyukh on 1 June, and the leaders of the rebellion were arrested. A court martial found more than 150 persons, including a number of Government officials, directly connected with the uprising. Nine of them were



sentenced to death and the others were imprisoned for terms ranging from three years to hard labour for life.

#### DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT AND THE NEW ELECTIONS

The coming of the Ikha Party to power coincided with the adjournment of Parliament; but the Ikha leaders, who had bitterly complained of the 'Ali Jawdat elections, had made up their minds on dissolution. A royal *irada* was issued on 9 April 1935, dissolving Parliament on the grounds that 'the present situation demands such co-operation between the legislature and the executive as to enable the latter to carry out important reforms'. Such 'co-operation' between the legislature and the executive, the lack of which was often given as a pretext for dissolution, had virtually led to the domination of the legislature by the executive.

Before the Government proceeded to hold new elections, the leading Ikha ministers decided to dissolve their own party. Such a decision, it seems, was inspired partly by the decline of the party system itself, but mainly by Yasin's desire to have a free hand in the conduct of public affairs. Since the whole party system was tottering, the dissolution of the Ikha Party aroused little criticism.<sup>1</sup>

Preparations for the general elections were made early in June, but the final elections were not completed before 4 August. The number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies was increased from 88 to 108 since the population of Iraq, the Government declared, had increased. While this arrangement afforded the Government an opportunity to distribute seats among a larger number of supporters and influential persons who might cause trouble, the decision was not based on a new census which might have justified it. The tribal shaykhs were more fairly represented than in previous elections, and a number of editors of the Baghdad daily papers were returned as deputies. The increase in the tribal representation reflected the growing influence of the tribal shaykhs following the uprisings in the Middle Euphrates; but this increase, as was rightly pointed out, merely meant unqualified support for the Government owing to the ignorance, and even the illiteracy, of the majority of the tribal shaykhs. It was also regrettable that the leading editors of the daily papers were given seats in Parliament, for their recruitment as deputies caused them to support the Government, so that the nation was deprived of the benefit of their criticism.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [Rafael Butti], 'al-Hashimi and his Great Experiment', *al-Bilad* (Baghdad), 2 May 1935.

<sup>2</sup> *al-Islah*, 10 Aug. 1935; and *as-Sarkha*, 10 Sept. 1935.

On 4 July, one month before the general elections were completed, the Government announced its policy, which embodied, as usual, an ambitious programme of reform.<sup>1</sup> It promised general and sweeping reforms in all Government departments. Special mention was made of an amendment of the Electoral Law, the enactment of a law for trade unions, the reorganization of the municipal and local governments, the reorganization and expansion of the army, and the establishment of a national bank. Mention was also made of raising the standard of living of the tribal population with a view to their eventual settlement and their accommodation to agriculture and industry.<sup>2</sup>

On 8 August the new Parliament met and elected Muhammad Zaki, Minister of Justice, as President of the Chamber of Deputies, and Muhammad as-Sadr as President of the Senate. In his Speech from the Throne the King reviewed the events which led up to the formation of the new Government and urged stability and constructive work.<sup>3</sup>

In the debate on the King's Speech the secret meetings at Sulaykh were mentioned for the first time. Senator Midfa'i, whose Cabinet had just been overthrown as a result of the Diwaniya uprising, made a statement on 15 August in which he accused Rashid 'Ali, Minister of the Interior, as the chief leader who had organized the Sulaykh meetings and incited the tribes to revolt. Yasin al-Hashimi, in defending his Minister of the Interior, replied in like manner by accusing Senator Midfa'i of inciting subsequent tribal uprisings against the Government.<sup>4</sup> It is significant that such accusations and counter-accusations, if made in normal circumstances, might have led to extensive legal investigations; but since both the ministers and their opponents were probably equally guilty, each faction felt quite satisfied by registering a protest.

During its short extraordinary sitting (August–September), Parliament passed a law of general amnesty on 7 September which pardoned all those who took part in the Middle Euphrates uprisings. By this measure the Government sought to placate the entire Middle Euphrates area; but it was regrettable that the pardon, for purely political reasons, included persons who had committed criminal acts both in

<sup>1</sup> See text in *al-Bilad*, 5 July 1935.

<sup>2</sup> For an apologia of the economic and financial policy of the Government by its Minister of Finance, see Ra'uf al-Bahrani, *The Sound Financial Policy of the Second Hashimi Cabinet* (Damascus, 1938). (In Arabic.)

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 6th (Extraord.) Sess., 1935, pp. 1–2.

<sup>4</sup> *Proc. Senate*, Extraord. Sess., 1935, pp. 9–11.

the Middle Euphrates and in the Kurdish districts. Parliament likewise passed a law on 29 August which empowered the Government to dismiss or put on the retired list any Government officials who lacked efficiency or integrity. In practice, however, this law afforded the Government an opportunity to replace those officials whose loyalty was doubtful by others who were friends or supporters of the leading ministers.<sup>1</sup> The action taken by the Yasin-Rashid administration to rid the country of inefficient officials may be justified on the grounds that a considerable number of officials had been appointed or promoted for purely political considerations. Such officials, encouraged by frequent Cabinet changes, took sides with prospective ministers. When these ministers achieved power, their friends were amply rewarded. Such a spoils system, needless to say, had a very damaging effect on the efficiency and morale of Government administration. In 1931 General Nuri, then Prime Minister, dismissed a number of inefficient officials, but most of them were later reappointed on personal and political grounds. The spoils system had become so deep-rooted that the Yasin-Rashid administration, if it aimed at reform at all, could obviously do very little to improve the situation.

Under the Yasin-Rashid administration Parliament passed over a hundred new laws which covered various phases of the country's life. One of them was for the establishment of an agricultural bank; another for the regulation and protection of labour; and still another for the stimulation of local industries. The National Conscription Law, which was passed under the Midfa'i administration in 1934, was revised and enforced in 1935. Finally, a law abolishing the time-honoured titles of Pasha, Beg, and Effendi, which were inherited from the Ottoman Empire, was passed on 4 April 1936. Every citizen became a Sayyid, a word equivalent to Mr, without distinction. While the people continued to use titles in everyday speech, the law was enforced in respect of all official correspondence.

#### FURTHER UPRISINGS

Five further uprisings took place during the Yasin-Rashid administration. They arose either in protest against the Ikha leaders themselves or as a result of long-standing grievances against the central administration. Of the latter type was the Barzan uprising of Zibar, in Kurdistan, which took place in August 1935. The Kurds, who are

<sup>1</sup> See a statement to this effect made by Midfa'i in the Senate, *Proc. Senate*, Extraord. Sess., 1935, p. 78.

racially different from the Arab majority, had long complained of discrimination against them and had agitated for decentralization; but their complaint could hardly be justified, for the southern Arab areas, which were as poor and backward as the Kurdish, had been just as badly neglected and misgoverned by the central Government. The short-sightedness of the Iraqi Government in handling Kurdish affairs was reflected by their merely crushing such revolts by force, and punishing or bribing the leaders; thus the masses were left forever dissatisfied. Such handling of the situation obviously offered opportunities for adventurers to assume leadership of the malcontent Kurds, and thus the revolts often recurred. The Zibar uprising was no exception to the rule: the dissatisfied Barzanis were led by a certain Khalil Khoshawi, who started his rebellion by raiding and plundering a number of neighbouring villages. Owing to the mountainous nature of the area and its nearness to Turkey, it took the Iraqi Government, in co-operation with the Turkish Government, several months before the rebellion was completely put down in March 1936.

The next uprising, which also took place in the north, was quite different in nature from its predecessor. The Yazidis, whose peculiar religion seems to others to require them to pay homage to the Devil (hence their name, the Devil Worshipers), were not well disposed to national conscription. They petitioned the Government for exemption from military service on the grounds that their religion would not permit them to fight, and that they had already been exempt from military service under the Ottoman administration. The Iraqi Government, fearful lest this exemption would constitute a precedent for other religious groups or communities, paid no attention to the Yazidi request. The Yazidis, accordingly, led by Da'ud ad-Da'ud, defied authority and refused to submit to conscription. The Government, suspecting that the rebellion was inspired by its opponents, decided to crush it by force. It did not take long before the revolt was completely crushed, in October 1935, and the Yazidis submitted to national conscription. Da'ud fled to Syria, but the other ringleaders were arrested, tried by a court martial, and hanged. This poor and primitive community, already on its way to extinction, should have been treated more leniently by the Yasin-Rashid administration, since the majority of the Yazidis are so ignorant and harmless that they could hardly have constituted a threat to the central authority.

A number of other revolts against national conscription took place in the south. One of them was at Mudayna, in the Basra *liwa*, and



another in Gharraf, in the Muntafiq *liwa*. While grievances arising from bad social and economic conditions were the real causes of dissatisfaction, the enforcement of national conscription brought matters to a head. The tribesmen who revolted, though poor and wretched, were ruthlessly crushed. The Mudayna uprising was put down in September 1935, and the other in February 1936.

A more serious revolt that took place in the south was the second revolt of Rumaytha (April 1936). The Izrayj and Dawalim tribes, it will be remembered, had already revolted in April a year before. Shaykh Khawwam, the tribal Chief of Izrayj, was removed and his cousin, Shaykh Shanshul al-Hasan, was installed as tribal chief in his place. Shanshul, who lacked the ability and popularity of Khawwam, had difficulty in keeping his tribesmen quiet. When the Government enforced national conscription, the situation at Rumaytha became exceedingly difficult to control. Matters came to a head when the Government prohibited (March 1936) the public ceremonial of 'Ashura' (the annual celebration of the assassination of Husayn), which prompted the tribes to adopt a manifestly hostile attitude. The Government again proclaimed martial law in that area and the rebellion was put down in May without much difficulty.

Finally, the Agra' tribes of Diwaniya, led by Shaykh Sha'lan al-Atiya, revolted in June 1936. Shaykh Sha'lan, it will be remembered, had raised a rebellion against both 'Ali Jawdat and Midfa'i (March 1935) in favour of an Ikha Government. The shaykh's services, it seems, were not fully recognized by the Government; he was, accordingly, easily won over by the Government's opponents. The Government declared martial law in the area and dispatched forces under the able command of General Bakr Sidqi, who ruthlessly crushed the rebellion. Bakr arrested Shaykh Sha'lan and was in favour of executing him; but Hikmat Sulayman and Abu 't-Timman begged for mercy. The shaykh was at first sentenced to death by the court martial, but Bakr's request to commute the sentence to exile was granted on the grounds that he had already given the shaykh a promise of pardon if he would surrender voluntarily.

#### THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE OPPOSITION

The Government's success in putting down the tribal uprisings, which were regarded as merely inspired by its opponents, prompted the leading ministers to tighten control over their opponents. The opposition papers were gradually put under more rigid censorship,

and such papers as *as-Sarkha* and *al-Bayan*, which paid no attention to Government control, were immediately suppressed.<sup>1</sup> *al-Islah*, whose criticism was rather mild, was at the outset temporarily suspended and later suppressed, never to appear again. *al-'Alam al-'Arabi*, edited by Salim Hassun, whose cryptic criticism had often been resented by the Government, was also suppressed. Government officials whose loyalty to the Yasin-Rashid administration was suspected were either transferred or dismissed. Spies were stationed everywhere to report on the movements and activities of rival politicians and suspected Government officials. It was indeed an uncomfortable way of life (in which the present writer had his own share of discomfort) for all suspected persons as well as for enlightened young men who had outspoken liberal ideas.

The most damaging opposition to the Government came from the Ahali group, led by Hikmat Sulayman and Ja'far Abu 't-Timman. The background and ideas of this group will be discussed in the following chapter, but its attack on the Government may be dealt with here. On 7 April 1936 the Ahali group issued *al-Bayan*, containing such damaging criticism that it was immediately suppressed. In a leading article Yasin and Rashid were attacked for having accomplished nothing useful to the nation since their coming into power. In another article the Government, which flattered itself on concluding a favourable agreement with England (by which the ownership of the railways was transferred to Iraq), was criticized for having virtually put 'the economy of Iraq under British control for another twenty years'.<sup>2</sup> When another issue of *al-Bayan* was still in the press, the Government, having been informed of a more damaging criticism, suppressed the paper and confiscated the press on 15 May.

While the Government was suppressing the Middle Euphrates uprisings, Hikmat and Abu 't-Timman were able to hold a secret meeting to which a number of leading political opponents were invited, such as Midfa'i and Naji as-Suwaydi. The Government's policy of ruthlessly suppressing the tribes was condemned, and the opposition leaders decided to submit a petition to the King criticizing the Government's action. The petition, signed by Abu 't-Timman on behalf of the leaders, was presented to the King on 10 May. No Iraqi paper would dare to publish the petition, but a Syrian newspaper issued in Damascus, *al-Qabas*, published the text on 17 May. Copies

<sup>1</sup> These two papers were suppressed after the first issue. See *as-Sarkha*, 10 Sept. 1935, and *al-Bayan*, 7 Apr. 1936.

<sup>2</sup> *al-Bayan*, 7 Apr. 1936, p. 1.

of the paper were later smuggled into and distributed in Baghdad. Another petition, signed by all leaders of opposing groups, was again presented to the King and published in *al-Qabas* on 24 May.

Having been denied the right to issue any daily paper, the Ahali group petitioned the King on 12 August, requesting him to put an end to the Government's rigid control of the press and to permit the reissue of suppressed papers. This petition, like its predecessors, became known to the public only through the foreign press, when it appeared in a Lebanese newspaper, *al-Masa'*, on 23 August, signed by Hikmat Sulayman, Abu 't-Timman, and Kamil al-Chadirchi. A number of unlicensed papers were secretly edited and distributed, especially by radical and Communist groups, which attacked Yasin and Rashid personally and criticized their reactionary policy. Such papers were often seized by the police, and certain suspected Communists, such as 'Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, a member of the Ahali group, were arrested. But the Government's policy of increasingly restricting individual liberty inevitably led to dissatisfaction among the people and naturally caused them to sympathize with the opposition.

#### FALL OF THE YASIN-RASHID GOVERNMENT

Faced with such unrelenting opposition, Yasin and Rashid, instead of granting freedom of speech to their political opponents, began to talk of the dangers of frequent Cabinet changes and of Iraq's urgent need for a stable Government. There was, it is true, a genuine popular desire for stability; but Yasin, in ostensibly trying to gratify such a forlorn hope, was in fact aiming at strengthening his own position. He declared in Parliament on 4 January 1936 that Iraq's most urgent need was 'stability' and that this was necessary to 'enable the Government to carry out its programme in a peaceful atmosphere'.<sup>1</sup> By advocating stability Yasin shrewdly tried to forestall his opponents who wanted a Cabinet change; but the public had already begun to lose faith in his administration.

Yasin and Rashid, furthermore, embarked on a campaign of propaganda both abroad and at home. They had successfully won the confidence of the neighbouring Arab countries by advocating a pan-Arab policy and cultivating friendly relations. A number of prominent Egyptian and Syrian nationalists were invited to visit Iraq, and the exchange of visits between Iraqi Government students and Egyptian and Syrian students was encouraged. Certain Syrian

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 6th Sess., 1936, p. 189.

daily press correspondents were so greatly impressed by the Iraqi Government's nationalistic tendencies and its support of pan-Arabism that Yasin al-Hashimi was often referred to in the Syrian press as the Arab Bismarck. The pan-Arab policy of the Yasin Cabinet, though over-emphasized for propaganda purposes, was indeed based on genuine belief in pan-Arab ideas. It is significant to note that one of the critics of the Yasin-Rashid administration, Baqir ash-Shabibi, admitted in Parliament on 28 April 1937, after the fall of that administration, that its most striking feature was its genuine nationalist policy.<sup>1</sup>

Inside the country Yasin and Rashid embarked on a number of tours in order to strengthen their position outside the capital. During 1935-6 Rashid Ali paid a number of visits to the northern and southern *liwas* and had conversations with their notables and tribal shaykhs. He gave them lavish promises which probably satisfied their own personal interests and thus procured their unqualified support of his Government. The most impressive visit, however, was that which Yasin al-Hashimi paid to the southern *liwas* in September 1936, where he was met by cheering crowds in almost every city through which he passed. At Basra he was given a formal party by the Mayor on 5 September, attended by the dignitaries and senior Government officials of the city. Yasin was so much impressed by the ovation given to him that he declared in an optimistic speech given at that party that it was 'his hope to continue in office during the next ten years' in order to carry out his Government's reform programme.<sup>2</sup> The people tacitly approved, but Yasin's opponents cynically remarked that the Prime Minister, by an avowed declaration to rule the country for the next ten years, was contemplating transforming the system of government into a dictatorship.

Whether Yasin and Rashid had really agreed to transform the system of government into a dictatorship is difficult to determine; but it was noted that the Council of Ministers was actually dominated by them and that there was a tendency to exercise dictatorial power, in practice if not in name. Yasin's interference in the affairs of other departments had already resulted in a clash between him and his Minister of Education, Muhammad Rida ash-Shabibi, who was a long-standing member of the Ikha Party. Shabibi, in protest, resigned on 15 September 1935, and Yasin offered the position to his protégé,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* 7th Sess., 1937, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup> For text of the speech see *al-Bilad*, 6 Sept. 1936.



Sadiq al-Bassam. The Ikha Party itself, it will be remembered, was dissolved on the grounds that the party system was no longer compatible with a stable Government. Yasin's high-handed policy was also reflected in his attitude towards Parliament. Not only had Parliament become an obsequious assembly, but also, it seems, Yasin lost patience in long debates on legislation, and suggested, in a statement made in the Chamber of Deputies on 4 January 1936, that 'confidence in the Government' was sufficient to leave matters to it without going into unnecessary, prolonged discussion.<sup>1</sup> Yasin and Rashid were also attacked for furthering their own personal interests rather than the national interests.<sup>2</sup>

King Ghazi, who was then a young man hardly twenty-four years old, felt uneasy about Yasin's conduct, which often conflicted with his own wishes. The King, it is true, had indulged in such hazardous activities as high-speed car-driving, which alarmed both his family and the Government, but Yasin's attempt to restrict Ghazi's activities created ill-feeling between them. Furthermore, one of the King's sisters had married a Greek subject without royal consent in June 1936. This episode, which was regretted by all, aggravated matters, because the King made Yasin the scapegoat of an incident for which he was not directly responsible.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly before the overthrow of the Yasin-Rashid administration, Ghazi had intimated to General Nuri, the Foreign Minister, his desire for a Cabinet change. In an interview with the writer, Nuri declared that he had communicated the King's desire to the Prime Minister; but the latter, counting on an ultimate understanding with Hikmat, was not of the opinion that he should resign. A rift had already developed between Sadiq al-Bassam, Minister of Education, and Muhammad Zaki, President of the Chamber of Deputies, which induced the latter to discuss with Hikmat the possibility of a Cabinet change. When Nuri intimated the King's desire to Yasin, Yasin requested Nuri first to see if there was any possibility of effecting a reconciliation between the Government and Hikmat's group. Nuri tried to

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 6th Sess., 1936, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> See 'Abd-Allah al-Basir, *Fi Ahd al-Hashimi* (Baghdad, Rashid Press, [1936]). 'al-Basir' was a pseudonym for Chadirchi.

<sup>3</sup> Yasin tried to do everything possible to please the King, without much success. On 16 June 1936 the Cabinet issued a decree 'depriving any prince or princess who married without the consent of the King of all royal rights. If found guilty of conduct incompatible with the honour and dignity of the Royal house, he or she may be expelled from its membership and deprived of the title and rights of inheritance.'

bring about an understanding, but succeeded only in reconciling Muhammad Zaki; Hikmat remained adamant in his opposition. Having won Muhammad Zaki to his side, Yasin, it seems, saw no reason for a Cabinet change.

Only a week passed after the failure of that attempt at reconciliation when suddenly and unexpectedly the Government was overthrown by the army. Yasin and Rashid were quite aware that intrigues might be planned secretly against their administration by Hikmat and his group; but it did not occur to them that Hikmat might turn to the army officers, whose loyalty to the Government was never suspected. The army indeed was regarded as the bulwark of the Government; its going over to the opposition sealed the fate of the Yasin-Rashid administration. The story of how Hikmat struck a bargain with the army to overthrow the Government will be dealt with in the following chapter.

#### RETROSPECT

In reviewing the events leading up to the fall of the Yasin-Rashid Government, it is possible to discern an increasing tendency towards the concentration of power in the hands of the central authority. Four years earlier, it will be recalled, Faysal deplored the weakness of the Government and advised his ministers to follow a moderate policy which would bring about co-operation between the Government and the people. The steady enlargement of the army, coinciding with successive victories attained over tribal uprisings, greatly enhanced the prestige and power of the Government. By the end of 1936, when the army proved capable of putting down any rebellion against authority, the Government's position became unchallenged.

The Government's firm control over the nation, which was then deemed necessary to maintain stability and order in the new State, had been achieved at the expense of individual liberty and by subordinating all national institutions to the executive. By frequent proclamation of martial law and resort to the army and police to enforce authority, rival politicians were silenced and the freedom of the press restricted. It was thus for the ostensible object of enforcing law and order, but in reality seeking to concentrate all power in its hands, that the executive had become increasingly authoritarian, denying every legal channel of opposition to rival politicians or groups. This authoritarian tendency, which widened the gap between the people and the Government, rendered the latter's position

helpless without the loyalty of the army. The army, accordingly, had become almost the sole guarantor for its staying in power.

Denied any legal means of opposition, rival groups were bound to resort to secret intrigues and clandestine activities. Since opposition through the press and tribal uprisings failed, Hikmat Sulayman had come to the conclusion that there remained for him only one possible means of overthrowing the Yasin-Rashid administration—the army. By secretly trying to alienate the loyalty of the leading army officers, Hikmat virtually disarmed the Government of its only effective power to crush the opposition; but his experiment of inviting the army to be the judge of who should be in authority had led to a complete shift in the tenure of political power from civilian to military hands.

## CHAPTER V

### THE FIRST MILITARY COUP D'ÉTAT

1936

Two widely different movements of opposition to the Cabinet were gathering momentum, but rebellion against the established Government was only possible when the two movements, divergent in ideals and aspirations as they were, joined hands in order to put an end to the alleged tyranny and corruption of the Yasin-Rashid regime. The two movements were the offshoot of entirely different ideologies and worked independently of each other. The first, best known as the Ahali group, advocated socialism and democracy while the other, mainly made up of army officers, professed nationalism and sought the eventual establishment of a military dictatorship. The Ahali group had a long way to go before it could claim support from the masses, though its leaders often spoke in the interests of the poor and the wretched. The army officers had won higher prestige and were supported by almost all national organizations.

At the outset the Yasin-Rashid administration was strongly supported by the army officers, and it was due only to military support, it will be recalled, that Yasin and Rashid were able to silence their political opponents by ruthlessly putting down the tribal-inspired uprisings of the Middle Euphrates. When, however, a few ringleaders among the army officers secretly went over to the opposition, the Cabinet's position became completely hopeless, yet it had no realization of the gravity of the situation. It was this Ahali-army honeymoon that set the opposition in motion and translated secret opposition into open rebellion. The work of the two groups was of far-reaching consequence and therefore deserves closer examination.

#### THE AHALI GROUP

The Ahali group was formed in 1931 by a few enthusiastic young men who were imbued with liberal ideas. They were of a circle which felt keenly that political power had for long been in the hands of a small set of elderly men who had deliberately prevented them from



playing their part in the political life of their country. But these young men were greatly divided among themselves and therefore were weak and politically impotent. They had no common background, social or cultural, and were thus divided into various groupings. There were, in the first place, those who had received their higher education abroad; and, in the second place, those who had received their higher education at home, mainly graduates of the Baghdad Law College. These young men of two camps, shrewd and ambitious though they were, failed to appreciate the benefit of co-operation, owing mainly to distrust and lack of intimate contact. But the need for a rapprochement among them was keenly felt and, therefore, a small group, composed of a handful of young men, was spontaneously organized, which came to be known as the Ahali group, after the name of its daily paper. At the outset the group advocated the principles of the French Revolution, with democracy as the ideal form of government. The *Ahali* newspaper, the group's organ, at once figured as the most prominent daily paper in the country, because the members of the group co-operated actively in the editing of the paper and contributed articles which had a wide influence in Baghdad.<sup>1</sup>

In 1934 the Ahali group had undergone a change. Under the influence of Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim and Muhammad Hadid, the group adopted socialism as its first article of faith. Abd al-Fattah had become a socialist, it seems, in 1930 as a result of his reading on the Soviet Union while a graduate student at Columbia University. Hadid was a graduate of the London School of Economics and Political Science and was much impressed by its outspoken socialist tendencies. Although he belonged to an old Mosul family, reputed for its wealth and conservatism, he brought back with him to Iraq a doctrine which shocked most of his fellow countrymen. And it was for this very reason that the group preferred to call its ideology Sha'biya (Populism) rather than to have it labelled as socialism. Abd al-Fattah, with the aid of his Ahali friends, edited two little volumes in which the ideas and ideals of the group were expounded. The first volume, though the larger, was introductory to the second, since it dealt with the history of political thought from the Greeks down to the Russian Revolution. The second volume, which was closely studied by the Ahali group, outlined the doctrine of the Sha'biya, and became, to all intents and purposes, its programme.

The doctrine of Sha'biya, seeking 'welfare for all the people' with-

<sup>1</sup> The first issue of the paper was dated 2 Jan. 1932.

out distinction between individuals and classes on bases of wealth, birth, or religion, advocated sweeping social reforms in Iraq. It laid the main stress on the people as a whole rather than on the individual, but advocated in the meantime protection of the essential human rights, such as liberty, equality of opportunity, and freedom from tyranny. But the State, it was added, must pay proper attention to the health and education of the individual as well as recognizing his right to work. It followed accordingly that the Sha'biya comprised the principles of both democracy and socialism, since it recognized the parliamentary system of government based on functional representation. Yet the Sha'biya was to be differentiated from both since, in contrast to democracy, it advocated a kind of collectivism; and, in contrast to Marxist socialism, it did not admit the existence of a class struggle in society, or the revolutionary procedure in social change. It also recognized, in contrast to Marxist socialism, the institutions of the family and religion. Sha'biya likewise recognized patriotism as an article of faith, but repudiated nationalism, since the latter had often led to imperialism and the domination in society of one class, while the former merely inspired the individual with loyalty to his country. 'The history of nationalism', read the Ahali manifesto, 'is full of blood, tyranny, and hypocrisy'; while the history of patriotism had shown that it advocated no aggression or social discrimination, and every citizen was fully recognized as equally important to his fatherland.<sup>1</sup>

Active and more influential though it had become in 1934, the Ahali group did not feel that the time had come to organize a political party. Instead, it decided to organize a social circle for the propagation of Sha'biya. Hence the Baghdad Club was opened early in 1934 for all educated young men who wanted to join in its social activities. In spite of the fact that the club was sabotaged by the nationalists, the ideas of Sha'biya attracted more and more young men and stirred up lively discussion. The club, however, was closed within a few months as a result of the indirect opposition of the Government. Indeed, the ideas of Sha'biya did not make much headway, owing in the main to the opposition of the elder politicians and to the counter-propaganda of the nationalists. Sha'biya, they violently declared, was none other than Communism called by a different name; it was therefore contrary to the national traditions of the Arabs and aimed at disestablishing the teachings of Islam.

<sup>1</sup> See *Mutal'at fi ash-Sha'biya* (Reflections on Populism), Ahali Series no. 3 (Baghdad, Ahali Press, 1935).

In the circumstances the group decided to use more practical means of widening its appeal to Iraqi society. The term 'Sha'biya' was dropped and the more radical ideas were abandoned for the time being. It was possible accordingly to increase the membership of the group by recruiting a few of the more liberal of the older politicians. Kamil al-Chadirchi, a former member of the Ikha Party, joined the group in 1934. Chadirchi, who left the Ikha Party when Rashid 'Ali came into power in 1933, had found that party uncongenial to his rather more liberal ideas. In one of his early articles written when he was an Ikha member, he had published a stimulating discussion on sovereignty and democracy in which he advocated the necessary participation of the general public in the Government.<sup>1</sup> His ideas were rather too progressive for the Ikha Party and it was therefore natural for Chadirchi to revolt against it and join the Ahali group. Under the influence of Chadirchi, Ja'far Abu 't-Timman and Hikmat Sulayman were also won over and enhanced the prestige and power of the Ahali group. Abu 't-Timman, it will be recalled, was a former leader of the Watani (National) Party. He was known for his sincerity and straightforwardness; he was a respected national figure and a professed believer in democratic institutions. But Abu 't-Timman had been disillusioned through his past association with various nationalist politicians, and therefore tended towards the left. His accession to the Ahali group was accordingly greatly appreciated, and he became its leader. Hikmat Sulayman, of whom more will be said in a later section, was also a former member of the Ikha Party. He was the initiator, it will be recalled, of the Sulaykh meetings, but his quarrel with the Yasin-Rashid group brought him also to the Ahali group.

During 1934-5 the Ahali group, enlarged though it had become, was still in a state of flux. But the coming of the Ikha Party into power in March 1935 definitely inspired the group to reorganize itself and to work more actively towards achieving power. An executive committee was set up, composed of Abu 't-Timman, Hikmat Sulayman, Chadirchi, Hadid, and Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim. The committee established personal contacts with other elder politicians and especially with members of other non-political societies such as the Society to Combat Illiteracy. The meetings of the Ahali group were kept secret, and those who joined were closely cross-examined and sworn to be faithful to the principles of the group before they were admitted.

<sup>1</sup> See *al-Bilad*, 28 Aug. 1931.

But Sha'biya was no longer preached, as if it had been entirely abandoned, and only the demand for 'reforms', in a general way, had become the chief slogan. There was, however, always an important left wing within the group which cherished more radical ideas. Chief among its members were Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, Hadid, and Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim. The first was an outspoken Marxist who advocated Communism pure and simple, while the other two asserted the principles of Sha'biya.

At this juncture some of the members suggested the transformation of the Ahali group into a political party, recognized by the Government, and called for a straightforward opposition to the existing regime through legal channels. Hikmat Sulayman and Abu 't-Timman were opposed to the idea, preferring to gather strength through personal contacts with Government officials and army officers. Abd al-Fattah, who advocated the formation of a political party, expressed his disapproval and thus, side-stepping power in the approaching hour of victory, withdrew from the group for which he had worked so assiduously.

The Ahali group continued to arouse opposition to the Government by means of violent attacks in its paper, but such attacks were easily met by the Government's rigid control of the press. The Government, moreover, suppressed all elements of opposition by force; the Communists were arrested, and Government officials who were suspected were dismissed. Some of the liberal elder politicians presented petitions to the King protesting against the tyranny of the Yasin-Rashid Cabinet, but all were in vain.

It was soon realized that the Cabinet could not be overthrown save by a military rebellion, and that such a plot could not be arranged before the army's loyalty to the Government was alienated. The Ahali group, indeed, had already begun to establish secret contacts with a few army officers. Hikmat Sulayman emerged as the hero of the plot and it was entirely due to his efforts that General Bakr Sidqi, officer commanding the Second Division, was won for the group. Hikmat Sulayman, younger brother of the famous Mahmud Shevket Pasha, must have remembered his brother's great adventurous feat when he marched on Constantinople at the head of the rebellious Turkish army in July 1909, demanding the abdication of the Sultan Abd al-Hamid II. With that memory in mind, Hikmat persuaded Bakr to lead a rebellion in the Iraq army in order to force the Yasin-Rashid Cabinet to resign. The writer has been told that



Bakr Sidqi was brought to a secret gathering of the Ahali group only once, because Hikmat Sulayman was afraid that frequent contact with Bakr would arouse the suspicion of the Government; he therefore volunteered to act as a liaison between Bakr and the Ahali group. Bakr Sidqi in turn brought another supporter, namely General Abd al-Latif Nuri, officer commanding the First Division; and it was mainly due to these two army officers that the revolt was carried out in so masterly a fashion.

Apart from the disloyalty of Bakr and his colleague Abd al-Latif, it should be noted that the warmth of the army officers' loyalty to the Cabinet had long since begun to cool. The army, indeed, was too often used by the Cabinet to silence its political opponents, and a feeling gradually developed among the army officers that they were being used as a tool against the political opponents of the Cabinet rather than against the external enemies of their country. The political system of Iraq had accordingly been weakened and the need for a 'strong' government was keenly felt by the army officers. It was reported that the army officers often argued that the army itself should rule the country in order to provide the strength necessary for reform, as was the case in Turkey and Persia. This growing spirit will be dealt with more adequately in another section; but it should be noted in passing that the disloyalty of Bakr Sidqi and his colleagues had ample justification in the changed attitude of the army officers.

#### HIKMAT SULAYMAN'S ROLE

Contact between the Ahali group and the army was initiated by Hikmat who, having persuaded Bakr Sidqi to espouse the Ahali cause, served as the liaison between the two. The ideologies of the army and the Ahali group were far from being identical, but the protagonists of the two movements, Hikmat and Bakr, had almost the same outlook and therefore opposing ideologies were subordinated to the wishes of the leaders. The Hikmat-Bakr liaison was of prime importance in bringing the co-operation of the army with the Ahali group to a successful conclusion; but it also shows to what extent political movements in Iraq were dominated by personalities rather than by ideologies. A study of Hikmat, therefore, throws much light on the subject; for the same reason another section will be devoted to Bakr.

Hikmat Sulayman, it will be recalled, was a former member of the Ikha Party. Of all the Iraqi politicians, he was best known for his

courageous and adventurous spirit, for his frankness and straightforwardness. He became popular among the young men because he appeared to them as a progressive elder politician. Apart from that, his importance lay in his great influence with the Diyala and certain Middle Euphrates tribes.

After his disagreement with the Ikha Party in 1935, Hikmat joined the Ahali group and worked to promote its activities. He was already on close personal terms with Ja'far Abu 't-Timman and Kamil Chadirchi, also former members of opposition parties, and therefore found the new group quite congenial. Being an elder politician and far more experienced in party politics, he became the most powerful member of the group. But Hikmat never declared himself a socialist; he deemed it sufficient to call himself a 'reformist' on the lines of the Kemalist movement in Turkey. He shared the views of his colleagues about the necessity of improving the lot of the peasants, whom he thought were in a deplorable condition. He also supported their principle of Government control of the new and infant industries of Iraq, and the necessity of starting new ones. His whole social and economic background was based, however, not on reading Marx and Engels, as was the case with his colleagues, but on his own understanding of the Kemalist regime.

In 1935 Hikmat spent a few months in Turkey. He visited some of its industries and acquainted himself with the country's social and economic development. Hikmat had been educated in Constantinople and had always admired the Turks, but on this visit he was the more impressed since he was able to compare the development under the Kemalist movement with the Ottoman regime under the Sultans.<sup>1</sup> In December 1935 Hikmat returned to Iraq and was seen walking down the streets of Baghdad with a hat on his head—one noticeable sign of the effect of his visit to Turkey. He gave several interviews to newspaper men about the recent developments in Turkey, but the most important one was published in *al-Bilad*, one of the leading papers in Iraq. Rafael Butti, editor of *al-Bilad* and former member of the Ikha Party, interviewed Hikmat in person and wrote three leading articles in his paper in which he expounded Hikmat's ideas.

<sup>1</sup> There was, perhaps, a sentimental reason which made Hikmat admire the Kemalist movement. Mustafa Kemal was a former member of the Committee of Union and Progress and served, during the coup d'état of 1909, as Chief of Staff under Mahmud Shevket Pasha, Hikmat's elder brother, who led the Turkish army in revolt from Salonika to Constantinople and forced Sultan Abd al-Hamid II to abdicate.

Hikmat began his interview by pointing out that Iraq's greatest needs were real reforms. But how could such reforms be carried out? 'Reforms', said Hikmat, 'could only be carried out by an enlightened Government, with personnel who are known for their progressive opinions, efficiency, and strength.' The existing conditions in Iraq, Hikmat added, were very primitive, and the people knew little about how to exploit the economic possibilities of their country. If there were an enlightened Government in Iraq, it would pay attention to the exploitation of such possibilities. He gave ample examples from contemporary development in modern Turkey.

But such an enlightened Government, said Hikmat, needed also stability. In Iraq there had often been changes in the Government, based in the main on personal issues. The cycle of the frequent rise and fall of Cabinets had undermined the political system. In Iraq, said Hikmat, the cycle of the rise and fall of the Cabinets might be compared to a 'joywheel', with eight seats filled by eight ministers. Under the joywheel were always some fifteen or twenty ex-ministers waiting impatiently for it to stop; and if it happened that the wheel did stop and the eight ministers left their seats, then another eight of the waiting ex-ministers would at once hasten to jump on to the wheel and occupy the vacant seats. The wheel would then resume its cyclic movement, and the remaining ex-ministers, including the eight ministers who had just left their seats, would all co-operate for their mutual end, namely, to stop the joywheel again in order that each might have another chance. As this cycle continued it was obvious that the ministers in power would have no time left for work, but only time to defend themselves from the unrelenting assault of the ex-ministers. In the circumstances no constructive work could be done and this well explained why very little progress, if any, had been effected in Iraq.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE ARMY OFFICERS

From the inception of the Iraqi Government there had been keen interest in organizing a well-disciplined national army along European lines, in order to maintain internal order and stability.<sup>2</sup> During the

<sup>1</sup> See *al-Bilad*, 15, 16, and 17 Dec. 1935.

<sup>2</sup> In 1921 the nucleus of the army was organized: 'on the recommendation of the Minister of Defence [Ja'far al-skari] the Council of Ministers decreed that the Iraq army should be organized, trained, dressed, and equipped on British lines'. See Colonial Office, *Report . . . to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Iraq, October 1920-March 1922* (London, H.M.S.O., 1923), p. 53.

mandatory period a small force was trained and gradually gained practical experience in putting down a number of Kurdish uprisings. The Iraqi army proved, despite a certain sceptical attitude of the League of Nations to British assurances, capable of maintaining order within the new State which was to be granted full independence.

After the winning of independence the army, as it was then constituted, was no longer sufficient for Iraq's national needs, because it was deemed necessary that the army should be the guardian of the country's independence as well as the instrument for maintaining internal order. Long before the termination of the mandate the Iraqi Government sought to introduce compulsory military service, but it was opposed both by the League, as a matter of principle, and by Great Britain on the grounds that the measure might involve Iraq in military operations against the tribes, who were opposed to conscription. When, however, the hour of emancipation from the mandate was approaching in 1931, the Iraqi Government began to prepare a draft bill of conscription which was eventually passed, after certain initial difficulties were overcome, in 1934.

The Iraqi army stood up to the expectations of the country when in August 1933, only a year after the attainment of independence, it dealt with the Assyrian affair so promptly and effectively that, it was then contended, it had saved the integrity of Iraq. Bakr Sidqi, commander of the forces which put down that uprising, suddenly emerged as an unrivalled national hero. As has been seen, subsequent tribal uprisings in the Middle Euphrates were also successfully suppressed under the able command of General Bakr Sidqi. These successes taught the army officers to perceive their own strength, and the Iraqi nation to eye them with reverential awe.

It was thus natural that the army's prestige, and the high position it occupied in the national life of Iraq, caused various ideological groups to approach the army officers in order to win them to their side. But it is safe to say that the nationalists, especially the ultra-nationalists, were the most influential group in the army since they had long ago been able to inspire the army with pan-Arab ideas.

The ideals and aspirations of the army officers and their contempt for the political regime in Iraq found ample justification in the actual working of the Iraqi Government. The army officers felt that while they had faithfully fulfilled their duty in suppressing the tribal uprisings, the politicians in Baghdad were quarrelling and intriguing against one another by inspiring those tribes to rise in revolt. The



Iraqi system of government had certainly failed to impress the army, and the politicians had lost their prestige through their intrigues. The disillusionment of the army officers was reflected in voicing certain grievances such as that the army was excessively used to put down inspired tribal uprisings, while the politicians were to gain the fruits of victory. Why should not the army itself, it was whispered among the army officers, put an end to the quarrel and vices of the politicians and rule the country through a military dictatorship?

In the circumstances the army officers often discussed the existing political situation in Iraq and compared it unfavourably with the neighbouring regimes in Turkey and Persia. It was contended, accordingly, that unless the army were strengthened, Iraq would remain weak and incapable of realizing the national ideal. They therefore came to the conclusion that the army should rule the country and help to create a strong and stable Government. Just as the military regimes in Turkey and Persia were eliminating foreign control and carrying out reforms, so should the army officers in Iraq rule their country in order to eliminate the last vestiges of foreign control, to create a stable political machine, and, finally, to liberate the sister Arab countries which were still struggling towards freedom and unity.

The most intensely nationalistic elements in the army were the younger rather than the older army officers. Owing to the passive attitude of the latter, these young men often organized themselves into small groups and discussed the ways and means of realizing their aspirations. Of the older army officers, only Bakr Sidqi was able to impress his younger subordinates with his energy and commanding personality. There were, it is true, a few officers who suspected Bakr's intentions and his personal opportunism; but Bakr, with the support of both the older and younger army officers, posed as the only soldier who could command the respect of the entire army. His role in the Iraq army can hardly be overestimated. A study of Bakr, therefore, as the most powerful army officer, may add to a real understanding of the role of the army in the internal politics of Iraq.

#### GENERAL BAKR SIDQI

Bakr Sidqi, though he had only recently emerged as a national hero, had long been watching the internal politics of Iraq with a keen eye. He won his reputation as an able and courageous soldier during the Assyrian affair in 1933; it was indeed owing to his daring handling of the uprising that it was so ruthlessly crushed. Thus he suddenly

emerged as the saviour of his country in the time of her trouble. On his return to Baghdad he was applauded enthusiastically while he motored through the main street, seated on the right hand of Prime Minister Rashid Ali al-Gaylani.

It will be recalled that it was Hikmat who had encouraged Bakr to take the line of action that he did in regard to the Assyrian rising. In an interview with the writer, Hikmat pointed out that Bakr had deeply impressed him with his ability and they had become intimate friends. Hikmat said that the friendship began when Bakr, shortly before the operations against the Assyrians, had visited him in Baghdad and had a long conversation with him regarding the situation in the north. Hikmat could not recall the details of the intimate conversation, but declared that from that time he and Bakr took each other into their confidence.

It has been contended that after the Assyrian affair Bakr began to entertain the possibility of the army's intervention in politics in order to help to fulfil Iraq's national aspirations. Such a move had been hinted by Bakr in a public speech which he made to the people of Mosul at a reception for the returning army after the crushing of the Assyrian uprising, in which he said:<sup>1</sup> 'Thanks to you . . . thanks which I offer as a pledge of what the army is about to perform in the future, in accomplishment of the great duty which the army has felt and is still feeling that it must be prepared to perform. Therefore let us, with army and nation, await that day.'

Subsequent relations between Hikmat and Bakr became more intimate, but Hikmat was then still an active member of the Ikha Party and there was no question of alienating Bakr's loyalty from Yasin and Rashid. Conversations between Bakr and Hikmat regarding the army merely explored the ways and means of strengthening it as the only guarantee of Iraq's independence. Their model, as well as their inspiration, was indeed Kemalist Turkey, because that country, they argued, had been able to maintain her independence only through the reorganization of her army. Taha al-Hashimi, then Chief of the General Staff and brother of Yasin, approved Hikmat's ideas and sought his co-operation for strengthening the army.

When the rift occurred between Hikmat and Yasin after the latter had formed his Cabinet in 1935, Taha naturally took his brother's side. Bakr's admiration of Hikmat continued, but his loyalty to the

<sup>1</sup> For the complete text of the speech see Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians*, p. 204.

Government was never questioned and he actually took an active part in crushing the tribal uprisings of the Middle Euphrates. But Bakr soon came to realize that his Chief of the General Staff, Taha al-Hashimi, though able and keen, was in reality not strongly in favour of strengthening and reorganizing the army. After his remarkable successes in the Middle Euphrates, Bakr perhaps wanted to be the Chief of the General Staff himself. But Taha was the brother of the Prime Minister and there was no question of removing him. Bakr accordingly gradually came to believe that the army's future would depend on Hikmat's becoming Prime Minister. Hikmat intimated to the writer that Bakr had come to this conclusion independently, but no doubt Hikmat had added conviction to such a view.

Bakr has been reproached for betraying Yasin and Rashid and for seeking co-operation with Hikmat only as a means to his own personal glory. His critics cynically remarked that he had looked at the rulers of his neighbours, Turkey and Persia, and found it significant that both of them had arisen from humble army ranks to rule their country and carry out reforms under military regimes. Personal emulation may certainly have buttressed Bakr's change of attitude towards the Yasin-Rashid Cabinet. Indeed, it was reported that after putting down the Assyrian risings, Bakr had expected more recognition from the Yasin-Rashid administration. Moreover, it was keenly felt by Bakr's entourage in the army that he was worthy to be the Chief of the General Staff, and that his promotion would be advantageous both to him and to his friends. Bakr and his followers must have expected compensation if Hikmat were helped to come into power. Subsequent events proved that these expectations were justified.

#### THE MUTINY IN THE ARMY AND THE MARCH ON BAGHDAD

Hikmat, it will be recalled, was the link between Bakr and the Ahali group; but in reality there was no common background between Bakr and that group, nor sufficient contact between them to create a common outlook. Hikmat's intimate conversations with Bakr, it seems, were solely for the purpose of using the army against the Yasin Cabinet, which Hikmat probably did not disclose to his group until the army manœuvres were about to take place in the autumn of 1936.

In October 1936 Taha al-Hashimi was on leave in Turkey and Bakr was appointed Acting Chief of the General Staff in his place. Taha had already planned to organize army manœuvres on a large scale in

the area between Khaniqin and Baghdad early in November, but Bakr, as Acting Chief of the General Staff, decided to take the opportunity to lead a revolt in order to force the Cabinet to resign. His plan was to march on Baghdad before the manœuvres should take place.

In the course of an interview with the writer, Abd al-Latif Nuri said that Bakr had disclosed the secret plan of the coup d'état to him only a week before it actually took place, that is, on 23 October 1936, when preparations were begun for the proposed army manœuvres. On 25 October Bakr paid a visit to Abd al-Latif at the Ministry of Defence, and there the two commanders held confidential conversations about the details of the plot.

Bakr left Baghdad on the next day for his headquarters at Qara-Tappa, half-way up the Baghdad-Kirkuk railway line. He disclosed his plan to several army officers who were taken into his confidence. It was decided that the Second Division of the army, stationed at Qara-Ghan, was to assume the offensive in the march on Baghdad, while the First Division, stationed at the head of Qanat ar-Ruz, situated on one of Diyala's streams on the north-east of Baghdad, would remain behind the Second Division for defence measures. All the necessary preparations were made with complete secrecy between 26 and 28 October. On 27 October Bakr paid another visit to Abd al-Latif Nuri, who had been at his headquarters at Ruz, reviewed the whole situation, and approved the preparations. It was at this meeting that the two commanders signed a letter (in the form of a petition) to the King demanding the resignation of the Yasin Cabinet. The letter was sent secretly to Hikmat to carry in person to the King. The two commanders also ordered the 'proclamation' to the people of Baghdad to be typed in their presence, and signed by Bakr Sidqi himself. It was decided, likewise, to call the force marching on Baghdad 'The National Reform Force', and place it under Bakr's own leadership.

Before Bakr had finally decided to carry out his secret plot, Hikmat broke the news to the Ahali group, declaring that the army officers had come to the conclusion that the Yasin-Rashid administration was intolerable, and that they had decided to raise a revolt.<sup>1</sup> Hikmat had

<sup>1</sup> The writer has not been able to ascertain the date of Hikmat's disclosure of the news to his group. But, it seems, this could not have taken place before 23 Oct., because it was neither possible for Hikmat to disclose it before the plot had been finally agreed upon between Bakr and Abd al-Latif Nuri on 23 Oct.;



undoubtedly brought important but grave news to his fellow members. He intimated that Bakr and Abd al-Latif had approached him with the plan of the coup d'état; he pointed out that the army's decision gave the opportune moment for the group to carry out its reforms, and that failure to accept its offer would not stop it from action. The group discussed the matter very thoroughly and, it seems, there were fears that the movement would be entirely run by the army officers. Abu 't-Timman, Chadirchi, and Hadid raised questions as to the danger of an eventual establishment of military dictatorship. Hikmat tried to persuade his fellow members that the army had no such designs, and that he was assured by Bakr that once the Cabinet had been overthrown the army would withdraw leaving the administration to the new Cabinet. As evidence of good faith, Hikmat pointed out, Bakr had asked to have the text of the proclamation and the letter to the King drawn up by the Ahali group. Confronted with such a *fait accompli* and with the persuasive arguments of Hikmat, the group finally decided to associate itself with the army's mutiny. Abu 't-Timman, Chadirchi, and Hadid at once began to prepare the texts of the proclamation and the letter to the King. The proclamation was signed by Bakr as the Chief of the National Reform Force, and the letter was signed by both Bakr and Abd al-Latif as commanders of the First and Second Divisions of the Iraqi army.

On 28 October Abd al-Latif left his headquarters for Baghdad to see if the news of the plot had leaked out. He saw Hikmat, and handed him the letter to the King signed by the two commanders. Copies of the proclamation were given to certain reliable army officers to be distributed the next day to the people of Baghdad. Muhammad 'Ali Jawad, commander of the Iraqi air force and one of Bakr's most intimate friends, was asked to send a few aeroplanes to Bakr's headquarters at Qara-Ghan, equipped with bombs and gasoline.

On the same night Bakr and his National Reform Force moved secretly towards Ba'quba, a town on the northern outskirts of Baghdad, and stationed themselves there in preparation for the move on the capital on the next morning. The town was declared the next morning to be under the military occupation of the National Reform Force and from here, at 7.30 a.m. on the following day, Bakr ordered his forces to start their celebrated 'march on Baghdad'.

nor was it possible after 26 Oct., since it was at that very meeting of the group that the proclamation was written and forwarded by Hikmat to Bakr, when it was typed and signed the next day by Bakr at Ruz.

The leaders of the Ahali group must have passed the night in anxiety and fear lest the Government should discover the plot, but on the morning of Thursday they found that the life of Baghdad was normal. The leaders had held a meeting on the eve of the coup d'état at Hikmat's house, to which Jamil al-Midfa'i was invited; but when the latter failed to attend, Abu 't-Timman was asked to intimate the secret plan to Midfa'i. When Abu 't-Timman paid a visit to Midfa'i in the evening of the same day, he only hinted at the plot and Midfa'i did not understand the implication of his remarks. On Thursday morning the leaders again met at Abu 't-Timman's house, where they waited for their ingenious plot to be carried out. Hikmat naturally was not present, since he was then on his way carrying the army's letter to the King. It happened by coincidence that one of the Ahali members, Abd al-Qadir Isma'il, who for long had been under police surveillance for his alleged Communist propaganda, was due for investigation by the police early in the morning. Isma'il saw the futility of the Government's repressive measures and knew that within a few hours he was to set himself free.

At 8 a.m. on the same day (29 October 1936) Hikmat paid a visit to Ra'uf al-Chadirchi, one of his old and intimate friends, who was also a friend of Prime Minister Yasin al-Hashimi, before he made his way to the King's palace to deliver the army's message. Ra'uf, who was trying to effect an understanding between Hikmat and Yasin, was pleased at Hikmat's visit and told him that the Prime Minister had just been discussing with him the possibility of a reconciliation. But Hikmat replied cynically, 'Since Yasin wanted to rule the country for ten years, why should he want to reconcile the opposition?' At 8.30 Hikmat became excited and walked out to see if there were any signs of the coming aeroplanes. He suddenly heard the roar of the planes over Baghdad, and hurriedly came back to say goodbye to Ra'uf, adding: 'Yasin wanted to rule the country for ten years; but by Allah, he will not be able to rule either for ten days or ten hours; not even for ten minutes!' He left his friend's house immediately in order to play his part in the drama which had just begun. Five aeroplanes of the Iraqi Royal Air Force were seen flying over Baghdad and dropping leaflets containing the proclamation, signed by Bakr Sidqi as Chief of the National Reform Force, telling the people of Baghdad that the Iraqi army had requested the King to dismiss Yasin and ask Hikmat to form a new Cabinet. The text of the proclamation follows:

To the noble People of Iraq,

The patience of the Iraqi army, comprising your sons, has been exhausted as a result of the situation from which you have been suffering owing to the conduct of the Government, whose sole object has been to promote its own personal interests without paying any attention to the welfare of the public. The army, accordingly, has requested His Majesty the King to dismiss the Cabinet and form a new one composed of sincere men under the leadership of Hikmat Sulayman, who holds a high position in the eyes of the nation and is esteemed for his noble career. Since we have no other objective save your welfare and the strengthening of the country's position, you will undoubtedly support your brethren in the army and its leaders with all your powers, as the power of the people is the most reliable in times of the country's greatest need.

And you, public officials, with whom we all are brothers and colleagues in the service of the country—for which we all work to make her able to serve the interest of the people—we expect you to follow that same [national] duty which has impelled us to request the King to act in the interest of the country, namely to boycott the unjust Government by leaving your offices and remaining in attendance until a [new] government is formed in the service of which you will take pride. The army may be compelled to take unavoidable measures which may cause some harm to those who do not answer our sincere appeal, materially and morally.

Bakr Sidqi al-Askari, Commander,  
Chief of the National Reform Force.

At the same time copies of the proclamation were distributed by certain army officers, while a few policemen began to give away copies in the cafés and to people in the streets. The King had already seen one which Rustum Haydar, Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, had given him. He read it with mixed feelings. But his apprehensions must have been allayed when early in the morning, as the National Reform Force began marching from Ba'quba towards Baghdad, he received a telegram from Bakr and Abd al-Latif assuring him of the army's loyalty to the throne.

Yasin al-Hashimi, who had left Ra'uf's house only a few minutes before Hikmat's arrival, was at the house of Jamil al-Midfa'i when he first heard the news of the mutiny. Unaware of his approaching fall, he nevertheless felt uneasy about his political opponents and was trying unsuccessfully to persuade Midfa'i to join the Cabinet. During their conversation the aeroplanes had dropped the proclamation which took the capital by surprise; when the news reached Yasin he at once broke off the conversation and hurried to his office at the *serai*. He spoke to Bakr by long-distance telephone, and tried to

persuade him to stop his movement; but Bakr intimated to Yasin that 'the movement was with the knowledge and approval of the King'. Yasin, accordingly, at once called a meeting of the Council of Ministers. No decision, it seems, had been taken when the Prime Minister was called by the King to attend a meeting at the palace.

#### THE KING'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE COUP D'ÉTAT

As soon as King Ghazi had been informed of the mutiny in the army, he called the British Ambassador, Sir Archibald Clark Kerr (later Lord Inverchapel), for consultation. Kerr arrived at the Zuhur Palace at 9.45 a.m., and found the King in a nervous state. He asked him whether he wanted to resist the movement. The King replied that he had neither approved of the movement nor asked his ministers to check it. Kerr thereupon advised Ghazi to call his ministers for consultation. He also advised him that the army should not interfere in politics.

The King thus called his ministers to a meeting at the palace, over which he presided. Yasin al-Hashimi and Foreign Minister General Nuri as-Sa'id came immediately. Nuri was nervous, but Yasin was calm. General Ja'far al-Askari, Minister of Defence, arrived somewhat later. Rashid Ali, Minister of Interior, preferred to remain at his office to maintain order and to issue instructions to the Mutassarifs (provincial governors) on how to deal with the situation.

The discussion at the Zuhur Palace meeting was very tense. Verbatim minutes were never taken and thus the actual statements of those who attended could not be reported in full. But the writer has been able to interview both Nuri and Lord Inverchapel, the only two surviving members who took part in the deliberations, and consequently he is able to trace the general trends of discussion. Yasin, having reviewed the political situation, admitted that there was opposition to his Cabinet; but a revolt of the army was the last thing that he had thought of, least of all on the part of Bakr Sidqi. He reported that shortly before he came to the palace he had been in touch with Bakr, who assured him that 'the movement had the knowledge and approval of the King'. The King at once denied the allegation. Yasin, who was half-minded to resign, suggested that the movement be resisted and thought that with the forces in the provinces he would be able to check it. Ghazi, however, kept silent and did not comment on Yasin's suggestion. Yasin accordingly inferred that the King did not approve of resistance; he therefore had no other choice



but to resign. At this juncture Kerr suggested that Hikmat be invited to the meeting to discuss the situation with him. Believing that the matter was now entirely in the hands of the two parties, Kerr withdrew but asked both Yasin and Nuri to see him at the British Embassy when the meeting was over.

While the meeting at the Zuhur Palace was taking place, Hikmat, who left Ra'uf's house on hearing the roar of the aeroplanes, was on his way thither with the letter of the two commanders, which he had been commissioned to hand over in person to the King. Hikmat thus appeared at the palace while the discussion was going on. When he was invited to attend the meeting he refused, and merely handed over the letter to Rustum Haydar, Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, in the presence of several army officers, to whom Hikmat referred as witnesses. He left the palace immediately afterwards. The text of the letter follows:

Your Majesty is undoubtedly aware of the policy followed by the present Government, which is imbued with nepotism and personal aggrandizement, and which has led to the ruin and destruction of the public welfare and the public interest. It has also led, by its vanity, to an encroachment on the [powers of the] Crown and has probably been looking farther than that.

Your Majesty is also aware that the army, with its leaders and soldiers, has been faithfully obeying [the Government's] orders because they were issued in your name. Inasmuch as the situation has become intolerable and is ever deteriorating owing to continual disturbances; and since the Government's policy is not likely to change; and since justice is no longer maintained and poverty and bigotry are prevalent in the country for the sole purpose of enriching a special class whose leaders are in the present Government—the army, which is conscious of the country's interests and desires to strengthen her, may not keep silent in the face of this serious situation which would undoubtedly lead to destruction.

For this reason the army approaches Your Majesty with a request to save the country from this degrading position by issuing an order to dismiss the present Cabinet and by appointing a Cabinet composed of sincere sons of the nation under the leadership of Hikmat Sulayman within three hours [of this notice]; and in case the Cabinet does not obey Your Majesty's orders during the specified time-limit, the army—which is still loyal to Your Majesty and the country—will fulfil its duty in the public interest, [an action] you would certainly support.

Commander Abd al-Latif Nuri,  
Commander Bakr Sidqi.

Failing to come to terms with the leaders of the revolt, Yasin had either to resist the movement by force or to resign. The King re-

mained opposed to resistance: he could not forget his previous bitter experience with the Prime Minister. Now that the army had revolted, he seized the opportunity to get rid of Yasin and Rashid Ali. Yasin had no choice and he tendered his resignation immediately afterwards.<sup>1</sup> The text of the letter follows:

Your Majesty is well aware that the present Cabinet has tried with all its might to maintain order throughout the country and has endeavoured with every possible means to raise the level of the country and realize her aspirations as far as circumstances outside Iraq allowed. But it seems that lack of experience and greed have led certain men astray from [the duty of] the country's defence to attempt an action which, I believe, will lead to evil results. I have discussed the situation with my colleagues and decided to avoid leading the country into internal trouble; I therefore hasten to present to Your Majesty my resignation and I hope that by your acceptance you will relieve me of the burden of the ministry. I pray the Almighty to protect you against trouble and to defend the interests of the country.

In his letter, it is to be noted, Yasin appeared as obedient and loyal to King and country, tendering his resignation only reluctantly under the threat of arms and not because the King desired his resignation. The King immediately accepted Yasin's resignation and invited Hikmat to form the new Cabinet.

The King's attitude has led to the theory, held by friends of Yasin and Rashid, that since he was so anxious to get rid of the Yasin-Rashid regime he was in league with the leaders of the rebellion. So far as the writer has been able to ascertain, Ghazi had no prior intimation of the plot. It is true that the King had many friends among the army officers, and they often hinted to him that they were ready when he needed them. Since the King resented both Yasin and Rashid, it was therefore taken for granted by Bakr and his colleagues that his attitude would at any rate be sympathetic to them. It is reported, however, that Bakr had intimated the army's move to the King on the morning of 29 October and assured him of the army's loyalty to the throne. This contact with the King was perhaps what induced Bakr to report to Yasin that the movement had 'the knowledge and approval of the King'. As to a prior knowledge of the

<sup>1</sup> The three-hour time-limit set forth in the proclamation expired at 11.30 a.m. At that moment five aeroplanes of the Iraqi Royal Air Force, led by Muhammad Ali Jawad, reappeared over Baghdad and dropped four bombs: one in front of the Council of Ministers, the second in front of Parliament House, the third in front of the post office and near Yasin's house; the fourth went astray into the Tigris. Only seven casualties were reported.

movement by the King the writer is inclined to believe that the leaders of the rebellion deemed it quite unnecessary to reveal the secret to young King Ghazi before it had actually started.

#### ASSASSINATION OF THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

With Yasin's resignation the crisis would seem to have passed. An unhappy incident occurred, however, which had unfortunate effects on subsequent events. This was no less than Bakr Sidqi's sudden and unexpected decision to assassinate the Minister of Defence, Ja'far al-Askari.

Before he had gone to attend the conference at Zuhur Palace, Ja'far, on his own initiative as Minister of Defence, had issued rather contradictory and confusing orders presumably designed to stop the march on Baghdad and overthrow the plot. One order was to the Commander of Armoured Forces to wait for him at Shahraban; another was to the Commander of Artillery to move to Baghdad, but not to do anything until he saw him; another was to the Commander of Infantry, also to move to Baghdad; and another to 'Abd al-Latif Nuri to stop any action until he came to see him. These were construed by Bakr as definitely intended to create confusion in the army and prevent the coup d'état. Ja'far's orders were given to an officer who was asked to hand them in person to the commanders concerned. When that officer went to the rebels to hand over the orders, Bakr's attention was called to them and he at once discovered in Ja'far an enemy of his movement. It is contended that had these orders been given to the commanders concerned, they might have created trouble for Bakr owing to Ja'far's popularity among the army officers.

Nor was that all. Ja'far's next move cost him his life. After he had issued his orders to the officers, Ja'far went to the Zuhur Palace to take part in the Cabinet deliberations. It is reported that he was in favour of the resignation of the Cabinet, and that he was, indeed, neither a staunch supporter of Yasin nor of his policy. But he saw no reason why the army should march on Baghdad once the Cabinet had decided to resign. He accordingly asked the King to give him a personal letter to Bakr in order to stop the army's advance. It was a daring move and young King Ghazi did not foresee the evil consequences. Nor did Ja'far, it seems, foresee that his earlier move to create dissension in the army might have become known and have turned the leaders of the mutiny against him. But he was determined

to carry out his mission and went to hand over the King's letter to Bakr in person. The text of the letter follows:<sup>1</sup>

29 October 1936.

Dear Bakr Sidqi,

This letter [will be] handed over to you by Sayyid Ja'far al-Askari who, coming to you in a special manner, will discuss [with you] the situation. I have just been informed that three [*sic*] bombs have been dropped [on Baghdad] by some aeroplanes; I was much surprised at this new action since I have already informed you on the telephone of the necessity of stopping any further action until I [could] deal with the present position. Any further movement [on the part of the army] would inevitably have the worst effects on the future of the country and the reputation of the army, for there is absolutely no necessity for such action. Further details will be given to you by Ja'far.

Ghazi,  
Commander-in-Chief.

The news of Ja'far's departure reached Bakr before his arrival. This peaceful move was therefore construed as another attempt to oppose the coup d'état. Bakr suddenly became furious and decided to get rid of Ja'far. He asked for volunteers from among the army officers who were willing to intercept Ja'far and kill him. No one had the courage to shoot the beloved Minister of Defence, but this did not stop Bakr—he at once gave military orders to four army officers who were bound to obey their commander. Ja'far was accosted on his way to see Bakr, was stopped, taken down a side road, and shot by the four officers.<sup>2</sup> The letter which Ja'far brought with him was taken to Bakr, who read it in disgust, crumpled it up, and threw it aside.

Ja'far's action has been criticized on the ground that he was a member of the Cabinet against which the army had rebelled and therefore it was too dangerous to go out to meet the army in revolt. Undoubtedly Ja'far had trusted to his popularity among the army officers, but with feelings running high this was not enough to save his life. For Bakr and the army officers it was a matter of life and

<sup>1</sup> This letter has so far been regarded as a lost document; but the writer, through the kind mediation of Kamil Chadirchi, has been able to obtain a copy of the original from the army officer who picked it up after Bakr Sidqi had crumpled it in anger and thrown it aside.

<sup>2</sup> Ja'far was buried where he was shot near the old Waziriya canal, to the north-east of Baghdad; his body remained there until it was removed to the royal mausoleum on 4 Oct. 1937, by order of the Midfa'i Cabinet, which followed that of Hikmat.



death, and therefore they could not afford to rule out the possibility of betrayal, more especially in the light of Ja'far's previous contradictory orders.

The writer is of the opinion that Bakr was in the wrong in ruling out the possibility of a diplomatic contact, but contends that the letter should have been sent by a junior officer and not brought by Ja'far himself, who thus aroused undue suspicion. Since Ja'far was not a staunch supporter of the Yasin-Rashid Cabinet nor ever an apologist for its policy, his assassination was a political blunder on the part of Bakr. Not only did Ja'far's relatives and friends become the sworn enemies of the coup d'état Government, but also from the very beginning the incident stamped the mark of political crime on the author of a movement that claimed to end the tyranny of a despotic Cabinet. It was an irony of history that Ja'far, who as Iraq's first Minister of Defence in 1921 had worked so hard to create a national army, was the army's first victim when it rose in revolt.

#### THE ARMY'S ENTRY INTO THE CAPITAL

In spite of all efforts made to stop the army's march on Baghdad, Bakr insisted on entering the capital at the head of his victorious National Reform Force. Rumours had been circulated that the Yasin-Rashid Cabinet, supported by the police, was planning to meet the rebellion by means of stirring up the tribes. The rumours had undoubtedly reached Bakr, who, therefore, wanted to rule out any possibility of resistance. But it was also true that Bakr, the person most instrumental in making the coup d'état a success, aspired to enter the capital amid the applause of the people, who would acclaim him as their saviour. Bakr and some of his forces entered Baghdad at 5 p.m. and paraded down the main street. The army was indeed enthusiastically applauded and the incident marked the end of the crisis; it also put an end to rumours of the possibility of a civil war.<sup>1</sup> Bakr proceeded to the Ministry of the Interior, where Hikmat and his followers met for a final discussion of the new Cabinet.

#### FORMATION OF THE COUP D'ÉTAT GOVERNMENT

Hikmat was invited to form a new Cabinet immediately after Yasin had tendered his resignation; but he wanted a formal letter to that

<sup>1</sup> It is reported that a small garrison remained outside Baghdad for over three days after the formation of the new Cabinet in order to meet any move on the part of the resigning Cabinet.

effect addressed to him from the King, though a verbal invitation was quite sufficient according to Iraqi practice. Hikmat, however, pointed out to the King that the circumstances were 'unusual' and therefore a written invitation was necessary to rule out any possibility that the formation of the new Cabinet might be declared to be unconstitutional. Moreover, when Hikmat heard of Ja'far's departure to meet Bakr he suspected the move and refused, for the moment, to form the new Cabinet. Thus the crisis lasted for a few more hours until the issued was cleared and the army entered the capital in the afternoon. Hikmat insisted nevertheless that the invitation had to be addressed to him in a formal written letter signed by the King before he agreed to form the new Cabinet.

Having received this invitation, Hikmat began with his Ahali and army followers to select the personnel of the new Cabinet. It was reported to the writer that a discussion of the personnel was tentatively made at the time when Hikmat broke the news to the Ahali group of the army's decision to start the rebellion. It was agreed that Hikmat would be the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Abu 't-Timman of Finance, Chadirchi of Economics and Public Works, Abd al-Latif of Defence, and Yusuf 'Izz ad-Din Ibrahim of Education. But there was no agreement as to the portfolio for Foreign Affairs. It is reported that the army officers had hoped to seek the co-operation of Generals Nuri as-Sa'id and Ja'far al-Askari, but the assassination of the latter upset the plan and created opposition to the new regime from the very beginning. A number of elder politicians were named, and it was finally decided to settle on Dr Naji al-Asil, a diplomat who had once represented King Husayn of Hijaz in London, and was a former Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in Iraq. Although politically neutral, he was regarded as generally sympathetic to the Ahali group. It remained to allocate the portfolio of Justice. Hikmat wanted another Shi'i member in his Cabinet (Abu 't-Timman, a leading member of the Ahali group, was the only Shi'i so far). At the instance of Chadirchi, Salih Jabr, a former Cabinet Minister and Mutassarraf of Karbala, known for his non-partisanship and straightforwardness, was nominated. Jabr was not at first prepared to join the new Government, and accepted only after the insistence of Hikmat and after consultation with Yasin al-Hashimi, who advised him to take the position.

It is to be noted that Bakr Sidqi, who played such a prominent role in making the coup d'état a success, did not covet a Cabinet post but

was satisfied with the less dignified position of Chief of the General Staff. It is reported that Bakr was offered the portfolio of Defence but declined in favour of his colleague Abd al-Latif Nuri.<sup>1</sup>

At 6 a.m. the ceremony of forming the new Cabinet took place and Hikmat made a short speech in which he said:

I want to thank His Majesty the King [for his confidence], and I have no other thing to say now except to ask the noble people of Iraq, who have given us confidence, to go back to normal life. I also want to ask the public officials to fulfil their duties properly and I pray the Almighty to help if we are to fulfil the objective for the attainment of which I came into power.

<sup>1</sup> By offering the portfolio of Defence to Abd al-Latif, Bakr won the confidence of his colleague and collaborator in making the coup d'état a success, while he, as Chief of the General Staff, occupied the key position for effective control of the army.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GOVERNMENT OF THE COUP D'ÉTAT

1936-7

THE novelty of the procedure, and the masterly fashion in which the coup d'état had been carried out, brought to power a Government of unprecedented popularity and prestige. The leaders of the new regime had at once become a power in the land, feared by enemies and admired by friends and adherents. But the new Government was well aware of the fact that its popularity would soon wane unless the hopes and aspirations of the people were kept alive by the initiation of immediate and spectacular reforms. In his first press conference on 1 November 1936 Hikmat Sulayman, having assured the audience of his unswerving intention to carry out his former promises of reform, invited the entire nation to watch closely the conduct of the new Government and to compare its promises with its achievements.

The liberal and progressive elements of the people were in favour of the change and sought, by organizing a great demonstration, both to express popular approval of the new regime and to press for certain liberal demands. A manifesto containing seven points of reform was circulated in the capital two days before the date set for the demonstration. The manifesto demanded: (1) elimination of the effects of past injustice; (2) full strengthening of the army; (3) public amnesty for all political prisoners; (4) freedom for trade unions and newspapers suppressed by former Cabinets; (5) improvement of the condition of the poor, provision of work for the unemployed, and encouragement of local industries; (6) co-ordination of the various popular movements in the Arab countries in order to ensure progress; (7) equality of rights for all Iraqis; maintenance of the internal unity of Iraq; and the spread of cultural and health measures all over Iraq. On 3 November the demonstration began by holding a preliminary meeting at the celebrated Haydar Khana Mosque where incendiary speeches were made. As the gathering was rapidly growing, the excited crowd started to parade through the capital from north to



south with occasional outbursts and shouts of 'Long live the King!', 'Long live the Army!', and 'Long live the People's Cabinet!'. But the most impressive and dramatic features of the demonstration were the tribal folk-dancing and the national and folk songs which the more excited portion of the crowd performed and sang as it paraded down the main street of Baghdad.

In the course of his subsequent interviews and declarations the Prime Minister gave more lavish promises, including the seven points set forth in the foregoing manifesto; but the most important general statement of policy so far made was given by Ja'far Abu 't-Timman, Minister of Finance, on behalf of the Government, in his broadcast on 5 November. This speech, which was both an apologia for the method used in the formation of the new Government and a statement of policy, is of particular interest and therefore deserves to be quoted in full:<sup>1</sup>

The Prime Minister has deputed me to make a short statement on the recent development in the country and on the policy of the [new] Government.

1. The exceptional circumstances which compelled your sincere brothers to co-operate with the gallant army officers arose from the despotic policy of the [former] Government whose conduct in violating the law and the constitution has exceeded the limits of [the most] despotic rulers, in such matters as causing bloodshed, suppressing liberties, and closing down liberal papers, in some cases even before publication, and persecuting liberals everywhere. The country has indeed passed through a period [of despotism] which she has never witnessed before, a period of martial law in which the prisons were crowded with your brothers and sons on the slightest suspicion.

The despotic acts of the former Government and its arbitrary measures were not committed for the sake of public reforms, but merely for partial, nepotic, and personal ends. Such conduct has caused general dissatisfaction throughout the country and hastened the coming of the day of reckoning when the leaders of the National Reform Force asked his Majesty the King to entrust His Excellency Sayyid Hikmat Sulayman with the formation of a [new] Government to realize the desires and aspirations of the people. The leaders of the National Reform Force [have been prompted to do so], because they were aware of the difficulties and sacrifices, persecution and humiliation, which Hikmat and his colleagues have endured for the sake of the country's interests. The [former] cabinet, not satisfied with arbitrary and despotic rule, destructive and punitive measures, declaring martial law and exiling and sending to prison [liberals], did not leave office before

<sup>1</sup> *al-Ahali*, 6 Nov. 1936.

making heavy inroads on the Treasury—most of the instalments were not paid on the due date which endangered [the carrying out] of [public] schemes.

2. The Government which has now been formed in accordance with the people's wishes will endeavour to preserve peace, security, and tranquillity, as well as to administer justice to all. Every citizen of this country should know that the Government, having put an end to the period of persecution, transgression, and suppression of liberties, is anxious to take all possible steps to respect life, property, liberty, religious rites and places of worship, without distinction of religion or creed.

3. The Government will [also] aim at promoting the friendly relations [of Iraq] with [the other] countries in general, and the neighbouring countries in particular; the bonds of friendship with the Arab countries will be strengthened, and co-operation with them in all matters promoted.

4. It is [also] one of the Government's decisions to draw up a general and sound plan for the reform of the system of education, and the encouragement of the spirit of culture which will ensure the unity of Iraq, but will not be inconsistent with the realization of Arab unity, in order to put an end to [internal] schisms and antagonisms.

The Government has decided to provide money for the improvement of land in general; it proposes to distribute uncultivated Government land, which is not privately held or leased, among the citizens of this country on the basis of public interest, taking into consideration in particular the custom and usage of the country; it intends to open new roads, improve the system of irrigation, encourage agriculture, commerce, and industry, improve [public] health, and promote other vital schemes which are necessary for the happiness and welfare of all the people.

To sum up, we do not intend to indulge in talking, since actions speak louder than words. If the Government is to carry out reforms properly, it will do so only with the unshaken confidence and support of the people. However great the responsibilities of the Government towards the country may be, the obligations of the people are [still] greater.

This speech aroused great interest in the press and in Baghdad political circles; it was indeed received with over-credulous acclamation by the liberal and progressive elements, while the conservative and nationalist groups received it with a certain apprehension and distrust. The minister's silence about Arab national aspirations, and his casual reference to Arab unity, were regarded by the opposition as ample grounds for attack;<sup>1</sup> while the reference to the distribution

<sup>1</sup> *al-Istiqlal*, an opposition paper, commented in an article issued on the day following the broadcast of the minister's speech that 'the traditional policy of Iraq is nationalistic and, therefore, the new Government ought to follow that same policy' (see 'National Problems and the Policy of the Cabinet', *al-Istiqlal* (Baghdad), 6 Nov. 1936). In its issue of 16 Nov. *al-Istiqlal* dealt more extensively

of lands aroused the hostility of the landlords and tribal shaykhs, who did not fail to label the new regime as Communistic.

Criticism at home and abroad alleging that the new Government was not sufficiently nationalistic forced the Prime Minister, much to the dislike of his colleagues, to give lavish promises to the nationalists and to assure them of the strong Arab national character of his Government. Probably the Prime Minister gave such promises for reasons of expediency, but later, under pressure from the nationalists, he gradually became more convinced by nationalist demands than by the socio-economic proposals of his Ahali colleagues.

On the programme which the Government had already promised to publish before the general elections, much controversy had taken place in the Cabinet before it was possible to reach an agreement on its final text. Hikmat had sought to satisfy the various shades of opinion, from his leftist Ahali or Reformists (as they now called themselves) to the right nationalists. He also intended to conciliate British opinion, since the British press had expressed apprehension regarding the attitude of the new Government towards Great Britain.

The programme was formally published on 9 December, one day before the order to hold general elections was issued. It is hardly necessary to reproduce the text, but a summary of its crowded provisions will give an idea of its scope and contents.<sup>1</sup> (1) The programme dealt with foreign policy. Friendly relations with Great Britain, Turkey, Persia, and Afghanistan were stressed, and in particular the proposed pact of non-aggression with the three latter States was mentioned. Co-operation and friendly relations with the other Arab countries were emphasized, and a reference was made to the signing of a treaty of alliance with Saudi Arabia. (2) The programme promised more sweeping and extensive reforms in the internal affairs of Iraq. In Government administration it aimed at raising the standard of efficiency by recruiting abler and better educated young men, but with due regard to their moral background and integrity. It also promised to apply the same principle in municipal administration, in public health, and in the courts. With regard to the tribal section of the population, the programme sought to hasten the settlement of the tribes by distributing lands among them, settling the boundary

with the speech and severely criticized it on the points which touched on the conduct of the former Cabinet.

<sup>1</sup> Official text in *Programme of the Sulayman Cabinet* (Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1936).

disputes of their estates, and by extending various other public services to them. (3) The programme dealt with the economic and financial development of Iraq. It promised reforms in the taxation system, encouragement of foreign trade, and stimulation of infant industries. It also promised to pay attention to the condition of labour by founding trade unions, to the development of agriculture, irrigation, transport, and other economic possibilities. (4) The re-organization and the expansion of the army and air force and the encouragement of the martial spirit throughout the country. (5) The development of the educational system, popularization of culture, and improvement of rural and industrial education. Public education was to be free up to the secondary stages.

It is to be noted that the programme tended to be encyclopedic in its scope, and left almost nothing untouched in the public life of Iraq. Such extensive promises of reform were beyond the capacity of any Government in Iraq to carry out, and virtually needed herculean powers to be fulfilled within one generation. The tendency to give lavish promises of reform, it will be recalled, was not without precedent in Iraq; for almost all Cabinets had drawn up such comprehensive programmes, which reflected hopes and aspirations rather than the capacity of achievement. But the Government of the coup d'état, with its initial prestige and popularity, needed no pretentious platform and could have published a more specific and concise statement of its policy. The Reformists, it seems, were interested only in stressing the specific social and economic reforms, but expediency had induced the Cabinet to announce a programme which was meant to satisfy every shade of opinion. The inherent weakness of such a platform lies in its divergent, though not inconsistent, provisions, which were meant to satisfy both Reformists and nationalists; but in practice each group criticized it on the points which were to satisfy its opponents. The Reformists were not enthusiastic enough about its nationalistic items; the nationalists criticized its liberalism; and the reactionaries attacked its 'communistic' provisions regarding the distribution of land.

#### THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE OPPOSITION

From the very establishment of the new regime rumours were circulated that the leaders of the former Government would be killed and their followers arrested. Such confusing and disturbing news was damaging indeed to the reputation of the new Government, because



it created insecurity and aroused the suspicion of the people, who feared the beginning of a regime of anarchy rather than of a new period of order and justice. But the rumours were no idle talk of irresponsible enemies of the new regime; they were rather the result of the deliberate policy of Bakr Sidqi and his entourage who, having successfully overthrown the former Government, decided to rid the country of its leaders and adherents. The General, it seems, was also afraid of an attempt on his life by friends and supporters of the former regime; he, therefore, sought his own personal security by trying to eliminate every possible source of trouble.

The Prime Minister and his Reformist colleagues, however, were not prepared to go thus far, since they feared that such a vindictive policy would lead to a reign of terror. Moreover, the Reformists argued that, as a matter of principle, they did not believe in assassination. This attitude of the Reformists, as Chadirchi intimated to the writer, was one of the possible reasons which led to the subsequent disagreement between Bakr and that group.

A compromise was, however, temporarily reached and it was decided to deport the leading personalities of the former Cabinet to neighbouring countries. Yasin and Rashid Ali, who passed two days in anxiety and fear, were escorted by the police and deported to Syria on 30 October 1936, while General Nuri, who had sought refuge at the British Embassy, fled to Egypt in a British military plane on 31 October.<sup>1</sup> Other victims of the coup d'état were either immediately deported or later forced to leave the country.

While the exodus of the leaders and adherents of the former Government had the apparent effect of relieving the new Government of possible embarrassment at home, it afforded the *émigrés* in exile an opportunity of starting resistance movements both by arousing the Governments and press of the various Arab countries against the alleged anti-nationalist regime in Iraq, and by inspiring and encouraging their friends and followers at home to intrigue against the new Government. The immediate effect of the activities of the *émigrés* was the initial hostile attitude which the nationalist papers in the Arab countries assumed towards the coup d'état Government.

<sup>1</sup> The Government issued the following official statement on 31 Oct. 1936: 'Whereas it is the duty of the Government to do everything necessary to preserve peace and order, to ensure that public tranquillity is maintained, Yasin al-Hashimi, Nuri as-Sa'id, and Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, have left the country. The Government desires that public interest should be the chief concern of all, and, to achieve this aim all personal interest must be eliminated' (*Iraq Times* (Baghdad), 31 Oct. 1936).

In these circumstances the new Government was compelled to assure the Governments of the neighbouring Arab countries of its pro-Arab tendencies as well as to start counter-propaganda by inviting writers and editors from Syria and Egypt to visit Baghdad in order to report to their papers what they had actually found for themselves under the new regime. The Egyptian correspondent, Mahmud Abu al-Fath, interviewed Bakr Sidqi on 7 November, and on the following day an article in support of the coup d'état was published in the *Misri* paper of Cairo. The famous Lebanese writer and correspondent of *Sawt al-Ahrar*, Yusuf Yazbuk, arrived in Baghdad on 11 November, and made an extensive study of the new regime. Apart from the series of articles which he sent to Beirut, Yazbuk published a most readable, but uncritical, account of the coup d'état in which he expounded in forceful language the reasons which prompted the leaders of the new Government to overthrow the former regime. The title of his work is *The Liberators!*<sup>1</sup> From Damascus two correspondents arrived in Baghdad in November, 'Umar as-Sa'igh, of the *Insha'* paper, and Nassuh Babil, editor of *al-Ayyam*. Both of them reported to Damascus that the 'Hikmat Cabinet' was as nationalistic as any Cabinet in Iraq could be. On 16 November 'Umar reported to Damascus the following statement which Hikmat Sulayman had apparently made to satisfy the Arab nationalists: 'The Arab cause is our own greatest cause. . . I want our brothers in the sister Arab countries to rest assured that under no circumstance shall we forget them. . .'<sup>2</sup>

The Government dealt less gently with its opponents at home than those abroad. At the outset the Prime Minister declared that he was not going to restrict the freedom of the press and he actually invited newspaper men, in his first press conference on 1 November, to criticize his Government. But when the opposition papers defended the leaders of the former Government and warned their readers of the dangers of 'changes made overnight',<sup>3</sup> the Prime Minister could not

<sup>1</sup> Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbuk, *al-Muharrirun* (Beirut, Itihad Press, 1936).

<sup>2</sup> The Prime Minister commissioned Rafael Butti, editor of *al-Bilad* and a well-known writer, with the task of making a cultural tour in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Rafael was beyond all comparison the ablest newspaper man in Iraq; his commission had therefore the obvious effect of giving the impression in the foreign press that the most influential editor in Baghdad was in favour of the new Government. Rafael left Baghdad on 12 Nov. 1936, and during his leisurely tour was able to contact a number of newspaper men and writers, and had time to give public lectures in Damascus, Beirut, and Cairo.

<sup>3</sup> See *al-Istiqlal*, 4 Nov. 1936.

swallow such a cryptic remark. The attitude of the *Istiqlal*, *Iraq*, and *Tariq* papers had become increasingly hostile to the new regime when the liberal papers, such as *Ahali*, *Haris*, and *Anba*, initiated a vigorous attack on Yasin and Rashid and the latter two papers abused them in the most vulgar terms.<sup>1</sup> This personal attack induced *Istiqlal* to reply in like manner and to suggest that if the members of the former Cabinet were guilty, then why not 'try them'?<sup>2</sup>

The attitude of the opposition papers apparently exhausted the patience of the Prime Minister who, in his press conference on 12 November, did not conceal his dissatisfaction with the attitude of *Istiqlal* and said, appealing to the conscience of its editor: 'I want to ask you . . . to go out of Baghdad [into the country] in order to see for yourself if anything has been done there by those whom you are defending . . . and I want you to find out the actual situation and then you will not be asked to write save what you want in the light of your own conscience.'<sup>3</sup> The controversy in the press reached its culmination when *Istiqlal* published a long leader on 16 November, in which it severely criticized the speech of the Minister of Finance, given on 5 November.<sup>4</sup> This attack eventually forced the Government to suppress not only that paper but also other hostile papers such as *Tariq* and *Iraq*.

The Government also sought to rid the administration of officials whose allegiance to the former regime was notorious and they were replaced by persons more favourable to the new regime. This reflected the dominance of the spirit of the 'spoils system', which existed under former regimes. The Government of the coup d'état, which had promised the raising of the administrative efficiency and morale, followed the same method of transfer and dismissal on the grounds of political allegiance. Moreover, under the threat of dismissal or intimidation by army officers, a number of senior officials resigned. Others resigned in protest against the arbitrary conduct of Bakr or his army officers. The most important resignations were those of Rustum Haydar, Chief of the Royal *Diwan*; Mahmud Subhi ad-Daftari, Director-General of Municipalities; and Ali Mumtaz, Director-General of

<sup>1</sup> See *al-Haris* (Baghdad), 12 Nov. 1936; *al-Anba* (Baghdad), 7 Nov. 1936.

<sup>2</sup> *al-Istiqlal*, 12 Nov. 1936.

<sup>3</sup> *al-Haris*, 13 Nov. 1936.

<sup>4</sup> See Ali Mahmud, 'A Word on the Policy of the New Cabinet', *al-Istiqlal*, 16 Nov. 1936 (a leader in six columns covering the whole front page of that paper). See also replies to that article in *Ahali*, 18 Nov. 1936; and *al-Haris*, 19 and 20 Nov. 1936.

Public Accounts. Such coercive measures, which were intended to liquidate opposition, added insecurity to the already existing spirit of discontent among public officials.

#### THE ELECTIONS AND THE NEW PARLIAMENT

When the coup d'état occurred on 29 October Parliament was not in session, but was supposed to meet on 1 November, when it had completed its summer recess. The Government of the coup d'état, in order to get rid of a Parliament which was the creation of the Yasin-Rashid regime, decided to dissolve it and to have elected a Chamber of Deputies more favourable to the new regime. A royal *irada* was therefore issued on 31 October, one day before Parliament was to meet, in which it was stated:

Whereas constitutional principles demand that there should be full co-operation between the executive and the legislature, and whereas such co-operation must be fully maintained at the present time to enable the Cabinet to carry out the reforms now contemplated, and whereas, in the Cabinet's view, such co-operation does not exist between it and the present Chamber of Deputies, we have therefore issued our *irada*, in accordance with Article 26 of the constitution and in pursuance of the decision of the Council of Ministers, for the dissolution of the Chamber of Deputies and the holding of new elections. . . .

The legality of the dissolution of Parliament was questioned on the grounds that the constitution permitted dissolution only when there was disagreement between Parliament and the Cabinet, when the latter, appealing to the electorate, would dissolve Parliament for a final decision. Since Parliament was not in session and its attitude towards the new regime was not formally declared, its dissolution was therefore contrary to the constitution.<sup>1</sup> This, however, was no innovation in the constitutional practice of Iraq, but had many precedents, and no decision had been taken by the Iraqi High Court against such a practice.<sup>2</sup> The Government of the coup d'état, seeking sweeping reforms as it had promised, would naturally try to appeal directly to the electorate in order to give an apparently legal basis for the change which had been effected through a military coup d'état. The new Government, however, was neither frank nor courageous enough to

<sup>1</sup> See Suwaydi's criticism in a letter sent in reply to a question raised by A. R. al-Hasani. See text in al-Hasani's *Tarikh al-Wazarat al-Iraqiya* (Sidon, 1940), iv. 215-16.

<sup>2</sup> Both Nuri as-Sa'id and Ali Jawdat had dissolved Parliament during its recess in 1930 and in 1934.



say so, but timidly resorted to the same traditional pretext which had often been given for former dissolutions.

(By the time the general elections were held, relations between Bakr and the Reformists began to deteriorate.) The Reformists, counting on their popularity among the liberals as well as the rank and file of the people, suggested trying out the experiment of 'free' elections; but to this neither Hikmat nor Bakr would agree, fearing that free elections might return a number of deputies favourable to the former regime, and especially unfavourable to a Cabinet which had swept into power through a military coup d'état. Under the influence of both his own entourage and the nationalists, General Bakr Sidqi's suspicion was aroused against the Reformists and consequently he went so far as to prevent their extremists from winning any seat in Parliament. Hikmat Sulayman and Abu 't-Timman, Minister of Finance and a moderate but very influential Reformist, intervened and persuaded Bakr to change his mind in the interest of the cause for which they had so assiduously worked. The elections, accordingly, had to be held on a compromise basis in order to satisfy Bakr and the army, the Reformists, tribal shaykhs, personal desires of Cabinet ministers, and the interests of certain pressure groups. The General elections, which were ordered to be held on 10 December 1936, were not completed until 20 February 1937. Parliament was formally opened a week later.

The new Chamber of Deputies, composed of 108 deputies, was different from its predecessors in many respects. Only one-third of the former Chamber were returned, while the majority of the other two-thirds had never before been members of Parliament. Thus the deputies who had been staunch supporters of the former regime were excluded from the new Chamber, and the number of tribal shaykhs was also reduced. Of the newly elected Chamber, at least thirty seats were given to Bakr's own nominees, while hardly a dozen were allotted to the Reformists. A number of nationalist and anti-Reformist deputies were also returned who, while they unmistakably supported the new Government, stood avowedly against its Reformist members. No wonder, therefore, that the Reformists were somewhat disappointed with the results of the elections; nevertheless they did not entirely lose hope and they decided to stand firmly together in the new Chamber in order to influence legislation by their liberal ideas. The Senate, being an appointed body, remained as it had been in the former regime; but its President for the new session, Shaykh

Muhammad Rida ash-Shabibi, was elected for his favourable attitude towards the new regime.

On 27 February Parliament met in an extraordinary session, since ordinary sessions were usually held on 1 November, and the King addressed both houses in a joint session. The Speech from the Throne promised the inauguration of a new period of reforms and listed a number of urgent measures which the Government had decided to carry out during the current year. It also reminded Parliament of its duty to consider those measures as well as others in the light of experience and reason.<sup>1</sup>

When the new Chamber of Deputies set to work, a few members, both Reformists and nationalists, were able to influence their Chamber, under the cloak of public interest, to inaugurate vindictive legislation against public men of the former regime. In the midst of public excitement a general proposal was made, in the second session of the Chamber on 6 March, to the effect that a committee of investigation should be set up to examine the sources of income by means of which certain ex-ministers and senior officials had accumulated large fortunes through political influence. Some of the deputies who supported the proposal were prompted to do so by a genuine sense of public interest; but the motive of most of its authors was revenge. Though it was severely and ably criticized from a juridical point of view by Yusuf al-Kabir (Jewish deputy for Baghdad), the proposal was nevertheless passed by a majority.<sup>2</sup> When, however, the excitement subsided, actual legislation for carrying out the proposal was never made, since it had been found that various practical difficulties would have hindered its application.

Another rash proposal made during the public excitement was also not translated into reality. It was made by a few admirers, if not flatterers, of the military hero of the coup d'état, General Bakr Sidqi, in deference to his military ability and his contribution to making the coup a success. (The proposal, made on 28 April, was in the form of a request to the Government to commemorate the General's public services by erecting a statue to him in one of the capital's public squares and to offer to him a residence for his own personal use, since his income was limited.) The proposal could have been made in a less personal form as a tribute to the whole army by honouring its

<sup>1</sup> For text of the speech see Government of Iraq, *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 7th (Extraord.) Sess., 1937, pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> See speeches in favour and against the proposal, *ibid.*, pp. 94-97.

leader. In the form in which it was proposed Bakr's opponents were not unnaturally jealous. They were therefore pleased when Abd al-Latif Nuri, Minister of Defence and co-author of the coup d'état, blocked the measure by arguing that he was himself no less worthy of such an honour than Bakr. In order to avoid dissension, Bakr declared, with a proper display of public spirit, that if such an honour were ever to be made, it ought to be made to the entire army rather than to his own person. As to the offer of a residence, Bakr amused his adversaries by declaring that he needed no such place since he had always regarded his shelter to be under a gun! Bakr's declaration was reiterated by the Prime Minister in the Chamber and consequently the proposal was gracefully withdrawn.

When the new Chamber sat to deliberate on the Government's reform programme, the deputies were naturally divided into two main camps. First, there were the Reformists and their adherents who avowedly supported liberal legislation and pressed for a more advanced policy on the part of the new Government. Secondly, there were the nationalists, the conservative elements, and the tribal shaykhs, who invariably opposed liberal legislation. The Reformist position was probably best stated by Hadid who, in his maiden speech on 6 March, briefly but clearly described the economic situation in Iraq and explained the underlying causes of the country's backwardness. He regarded the chief cause of backwardness as agricultural, and he therefore contended that the most urgent reforms were those dealing with agrarian problems. 'Poverty, land disputes, feudalism, political strife, and many other problems, are all due to economic factors which, in Iraq, are basically agricultural.'<sup>1</sup>

Disagreement between the Reformists and their adversaries was manifested in the course of debate on almost all important legislation. It was indeed most evident during the debate on the budget; the controversy in one of the sittings took the form of a verbal duel between Hadid and Salman Shaykh Da'ud, and ended in an exchange of abuse between the two protagonists of the contending camps.

The attack on the Reformists turned on one cardinal principle, that whether the new Government's policy was to be Communist or nationalist. Matters came to a head in connexion with the debate on the new land policy. Both in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies the proposed land policy was criticized for its alleged Communist objective. Basically, the new land policy in the main threatened the

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 7th (Extraord.) Sess., 1937, pp. 18-19.

vested interests of the landowners and tribal shaykhs. Both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance declared in the most reassuring terms, in both houses of Parliament, that there was no question of taking land from the owners to be distributed among the peasants; there was, they asserted, enough Government land, never owned or claimed by any individual, which they intended to give to the peasants.<sup>1</sup>

The landowners and tribal shaykhs were never satisfied with such pious declarations, since the whole Reformist philosophy was condemned as dangerous to their own socio-economic position. They were not prepared in fact to accept any policy short of complete abandonment of Reformist ideas. The landlords were able to arouse the hostility of the nationalist deputies against their Reformist colleagues in Parliament on the grounds of their Communist ideas, and played on the religious sentiment of the conservatives on the pretext of the Reformist irreligious ideology. Both Hikmat and his Reformists exhausted their powers of argument in trying to assure Parliament and the nation that they were not Communist, but to no avail. Finally, Hikmat was forced to choose either to drop or to sink with the Reformists. As will be described in a later section, Hikmat chose to save his ship by dropping Jonah.

In spite of strife between the liberal Reformists and the conservative nationalists, the Parliament of the coup d'état was able to pass forty-five bills either as new laws, amendments to existing laws, or as approval of decrees issued before it met. Having completed its annual four months' session (27 February 1936-20 June 1937), it adjourned never to meet again, since it was dissolved by the new Cabinet formed after the fall of Hikmat Sulayman's Cabinet.

#### POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF THE ARMY OFFICERS

Bakr's sudden and unexpected coup had come as a surprise to almost all the army officers, though they were not unprepared for the idea of the army's eventual intervention in politics. The army indeed was much impressed by the masterly fashion and complete secrecy in which the coup was carried out. It was regarded as an admirable military feat, and for a time most of the army officers thought that their immediate national objective had at last been achieved. The

<sup>1</sup> See *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 1937, pp. 22, 23-24; and *Proc. Senate*, 1937, pp. 6-7. For a brief and clear statement of the Government's land policy, see an article by 'Fairplay', 'Land Policy in Iraq', *Iraq Times*, 7 Dec. 1936, p. 3.



Iraqi army, it will be recalled, had for long cherished the idea of establishing a military dictatorship in Iraq after the fashion of Turkey and Persia, but the more nationalist among them regarded such a military regime only as a means of realizing the pan-Arab dream.

Bakr, however, had already committed himself to a promise that his sole object in leading the revolt was to overthrow the Yasin-Rashid regime and that he had no intention of controlling the political machine. He had, it seems, feared the reaction of the people to the army's intervention in politics, and therefore he had declared on more than one occasion that once the new regime was established the army was to withdraw, leaving the administration in the hands of the politicians. Abd al-Latif Nuri, the Minister of Defence and co-author of the coup, had endorsed Bakr's declarations and assurances and was a firm believer in, though not quite capable of, restraining the army officers from indulging in political activities.

Bakr's followers, however, whose number had greatly increased after the coup, were scarcely satisfied with merely overthrowing the former regime; in one respect such an action would have virtually meant the surrender of the army's long cherished ideal of military dictatorship. It has been reported to the writer that Bakr's followers often pleaded with him, playing on his vanity, to take over control of the Government rather than leave it in the hands of unworthy 'Communists'. Thus Bakr's political ambitions were aroused and he was persuaded to let the army indulge in political activities,<sup>1</sup> though he did not himself take the initiative.

Very soon a small committee of Bakr's most intimate and reliable supporters was organized and held secret meetings in order to lay the foundations of a programme of action. The most prominent members of the committee were Muhammad Ali Jawad, Ali Ghalib, Jamal Jamil, and Mustafa Ali. The committee included both Arab and Kurdish elements and aimed at uniting the Arabs and Kurds in order to create a strong Iraqi nation. It repudiated the idea of the pan-Arab nationalists, which aimed solely at realizing the pan-Arab dream; it rather contended that its national objective was, as reported to the writer by Mustafa Ali, 'first, reform from within, and then co-operation abroad'. The committee recommended that military dictatorship was the best form of Government for Iraq, with General

<sup>1</sup> This was reported to the writer by a number of persons who knew Bakr. Mustafa Ali, then deputy and intimate friend of Muhammad Ali Jawad and a follower of Bakr, had confirmed this point of view.

Bakr Sidqi at its head.<sup>1</sup> While the scheme of the committee was intended to introduce drastic reforms in the country, its members were quite prepared to carry out their proposals by force and intimidation, not even excluding the possibility of assassinating those who would stubbornly oppose the scheme. The general outline and procedure of the plan were embodied in a secret memorandum which Mustafa Ali had prepared for Bakr, but which remained only on paper, save for several cases of intimidation designed to weaken opposition to the army's political activities.

Bakr's party was attacked by the pan-Arabists on the grounds of championing the cause of the Kurds against the interests of the Arabs. This was partly due to Bakr's Kurdish origin, but mainly because his followers had not avowedly and immediately begun to work for the pan-Arab cause, and they were thus branded as anti-Arab. In point of fact, however, the majority of Bakr's entourage were Arabs; and to do Bakr justice, he had proved to be a supporter rather than an antagonist of the Arab nationalist movement long before the First World War.<sup>2</sup> After the coup d'état Bakr often reiterated his support of the Arab national cause.<sup>3</sup> A few enthusiastic Kurdish nationalists, it is true, had taken the opportunity of the coup and secretly issued letters and pamphlets in which they ostensibly pleaded for co-operation between Arabs and Kurds, but in fact demanded freedom for the Kurdish people.<sup>4</sup> These, however, had neither been originally inspired nor were they subsequently supported by Bakr.

The real weakness of Bakr's party, however, lay not so much in its ideology, which indeed had a fairly wide appeal, but in the conduct and character both of its leader and of his intimate followers. Bakr Sidqi himself was praised for his courage and he had a shrewd sense of humour. He could be genial and charming, but he was often rude

<sup>1</sup> The writer, in the course of an interview with a few of Bakr's followers, raised the question as to the fate of Hikmat in the army's proposed political scheme. The answer was invariably that Hikmat was quite willing to serve as minister under Bakr. When asked by the writer to comment on this point, Hikmat said it was an absurd idea and he would never have approved of it.

<sup>2</sup> There are very few who still remember or admit that Bakr was one among a few nationalists in Baghdad before the First World War who championed the cause of the oppressed Arabs against the Turks. See a telegram, signed by Bakr and other Arab nationalists in Baghdad, sent in support of the first Arab Conference in Paris held in 1913 (Muhib ad-Din al-Khatib, ed., *al-Mu'tamar al-'Arabi al-Awwal* [Cairo, 1913], pp. 204-6).

<sup>3</sup> See Bakr's letter to Yusuf Yazbuk in *al-Bilad*, 15 Nov. 1936.

<sup>4</sup> See *The Kurds and Arabs*, edited by a few Kurdish young men (Baghdad, Najah Press, 1937).

and he was ruthless with his enemies. He was not endowed with much political wisdom, nor had he the gift of vivid and stirring oratory, though he was often able to play on the emotions of his army officers by his outspoken attack on British imperialism. Bakr was not in fact a natural leader, and was often suspected of egotistical motives on account of his petty intrigues against army officers. He was indeed alarmed by his sudden eminence and was mentally unprepared for the role which he was inevitably asked to play.

Bakr's entourage comprised both army officers and civilians who, though shrewd and ambitious, were very inexperienced young men. They were uncompromisingly anti-democratic, if not truly dictatorial, in spirit; they were, therefore, naturally opposed to the Reformists and sought, through their influence on Bakr, to force them (i.e. the Reformists) to withdraw from the Government. They were also opposed to the pan-Arabists, and thus failed to unite all the army officers. In trying to follow such a narrow policy they lost support both from the Reformist and nationalist ranks; and their reputation among the people declined owing to their outrages and over-indulgence in the cafés and cabarets of Baghdad. Their sole source of strength was the prestige and power of Bakr; and after his assassination they were left almost powerless and with very few followers.

The nationalist army officers, inspired by the pan-Arabists on the one hand and by leaders of the former regime on the other, became more active again when Bakr's followers lost prestige. A number of groupings were secretly organized; some of them were in close touch with Colonel Fawzi Qawuqchi and the Muthanna Club;<sup>1</sup> others were actively encouraged and directed by exiled political opponents of the Government; and still others were aroused by the dissenting Reformists who resigned in protest against the arbitrary Bakr-Hikmat policy. The political activities of the nationalist army officers were by no means co-ordinated; nor indeed were there well-organized groupings, which again reflected lack of leadership. There were, however, a number of adventurous army officers who were genuinely opposed to the Bakr-Hikmat regime and determined to put an end to it even at the risk of assassinating Bakr. Various attempts on Bakr's life were made but failed until the elaborate one of August 1937 succeeded. The story of Bakr's assassination will be told in a later section, but it is

<sup>1</sup> A pan-Arab society formed in 1935 in Baghdad for the promotion of the Arab nationalist movement.

important to note here how helpless Bakr's entourage became when their leader had disappeared.

#### THE ROLE OF THE NATIONALISTS

The nationalist ideology, it will be recalled, was based on the pan-Arab dream; and it had become a traditional policy for Iraq to work for the realization of that ideal. The Government of the coup d'état had not shown from the outset that enthusiasm for pan-Arabism which was so characteristic of the Yasin-Rashid regime, chiefly owing to the influence of the Reformists, whose main interests lay in other directions, and to Bakr's followers, who were determined to set up a military dictatorship in Iraq before anything else. Hikmat, with his traditional Turkish background, was at heart not a firm believer in pan-Arabism, while Bakr, with his alleged Kurdish sympathies, supported the aspirations of his followers.

The moderate nationalists, however, were not opposed either to Hikmat or Bakr, but saw grave danger in their co-operation with the Reformists. They therefore tried from the very beginning to bring about dissension between the Reformists and the army. The majority of the moderate nationalists, it is true, had deplored the fall of the former regime, but to their surprise they soon found that both Hikmat and Bakr were quite ready to support their ideology. They therefore came to the conclusion that the Hikmat-Bakr administration, after the fall of the Reformists, had virtually become as nationalist as any former Cabinet had been. Only those nationalists who were intimate friends and followers of Yasin, Nuri, and Rashid remained to the end the sworn enemies of the new regime.

The work of the moderate nationalists was indeed far-reaching since they were able not only to contribute to the fall of the Reformists, but were also capable of infusing the reconstructed Hikmat Cabinet, after the resignation of its Reformist members, with an intensely pan-Arab outlook. At the outset their influence was slight, and Bakr sought their support only as a means of weakening the position of the Reformists; but very soon both Bakr and Hikmat realized that the nationalist agitation had a wider appeal to the public than they expected and consequently they could not ignore it. In Parliament the Communist bogey was exploited by such nationalists as Salman ash-Shaykh Da'ud, Arif Qaftan, Mustafa Ali, and Rafael Butti, while both the *Istiqlal* and *Bilad* newspapers published articles on the impending Communist danger. It is reported to the writer that Ali



Mahmud, as representative of the *Istiqlal* group, had an audience with Bakr and promised him the support of his group if the Reformists were dropped. Bakr was naturally prepared to approve this new alignment and was able to influence Hikmat to part with the Reformists for the sake of a stronger and more popular group. On 17 March 1937 Bakr's attitude towards the Reformists was made clear by his public defiance of Communism; he declared: 'The soil of Iraq is unsuitable for Communism . . . those who would try to plant Communism in Iraqi soil would be just as unsuccessful as those who would try to transplant the palm-trees of Basra to the mountains of Norway!'<sup>1</sup>

After his final parting with the Reformists, Hikmat followed the same path as Bakr in making use of violent nationalist declarations to try to strengthen his ever weakening position. Hikmat very shrewdly seized the opportune moment at the time of the publication of the Peel Report on the partition of Palestine. Observing how intensely this had fostered Arab national feeling, he made several inflammatory public declarations in July 1937, in which he violently denounced partition and promised the Palestine Arabs help in their just cause. He also sent a protest to the British Government which gave the Arabs great satisfaction.<sup>2</sup> His newly reconstructed Cabinet accordingly gained strength, because on the question of Palestine the entire Arab world was opposed to Zionist claims. Even the recalcitrant ultra-nationalists were pleased with Hikmat's declarations, though they were by no means satisfied with the Hikmat-Bakr administration.

#### THE REFORMIST-ARMY ESTRANGEMENT

As has been stated, the Reformists agreed to co-operation with the army only on the understanding that once the Yasin-Rashid administration had been overthrown the army should withdraw from politics. At the outset, it seems, Bakr was quite prepared to live up to his promise, had it not been for the influence both of his army officers and of the nationalists.

After the establishment of the new Government the Reformist leaders were not aware of the army's inherent hostility, but were well aware of the possible opposition of the nationalists and of the

<sup>1</sup> See *al-Bilad*, 18 Mar. 1937.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 11 and 12 July 1937. For new light on this point see a statement made by Hikmat in *al-Yanbu'* (Baghdad), 1 June 1946.

reactionary elements. They realized from the very beginning that their strength would depend on the concerted action and the full co-operation of all the liberal and progressive elements. In order to mobilize such elements, it was suggested that a liberal political party should be organized which, it was presumed, would embody the aspirations of a popular movement. As a preliminary step a Popular Reform Society was organized, composed of four members of the Cabinet<sup>1</sup> and a number of deputies and Government officials. The Society officially issued its programme on 15 November 1936, and began to call for action immediately afterwards. The programme called for the State ownership of certain public resources and institutions, and the initiation and control of certain industries. It also advocated distribution of land among the peasants, and the protection of the rights of the working class by limiting the hours of labour and permitting the organization of trade unions. Though the programme promised co-operation between Iraq and the other Arab countries in foreign policy, it nevertheless aroused the hostility of the nationalists, who believed that this item was inserted in order to appease the Reformists' opponents. Behind the scenes opposition was incited by the land-owners and tribal shaykhs, who feared that the Society of Popular Reform would become a medium for the propagation of Communism.

Realizing the strength of the opposition, the Reformist leaders sought the backing of the Government and decided to transform their society into a political party. On 9 January 1937 it was announced that a meeting of the Reformist leaders would be held at Abu 't-Timman's house in order to discuss the ways and means of organizing the new party. Permission to form such a party was officially requested from the Government, but while Prime Minister Hikmat Sulayman promised consideration of the request, permission was never actually given. The Prime Minister had verbally promised permission, but under pressure from the army and the nationalists, he was persuaded to ignore the request.

Hikmat was indeed in a very difficult position. He was at the outset sympathetic to the Reformists and sincerely believed in their good intentions and genuine patriotism. He had promised them full support but requested them to wait until he was able to weaken their reactionary adversaries. Hikmat believed that in due course he would have been able to deal with the situation and counted optimistically on the

<sup>1</sup> They were Abu 't-Timman, Chadirchi, Naji al-Asil, and Yusuf 'Izz ad-Din Ibrahim.

possibility of a full understanding between Bakr and the Reformists. The turn of events ran contrary to his expectations, since Bakr, under the influence of his entourage and the nationalists, had become increasingly intolerant of the Reformists. The army's support was essential, and Hikmat could not afford to ignore Bakr's desires. He therefore thought it prudent to persuade the Reformists to moderate their demands for popular reforms and to condemn publicly the allegations of Communism. In justice to the Reformists, their leaders as well as their papers again reiterated their denial of any Communist designs and assured the public of the moderation of their reform programme.<sup>1</sup> The Reformists, however, insisted on certain liberal measures which they regarded as essential. Hikmat, who had become more subservient to the army and the nationalists, unconsciously grew bored with the Reformist demands and a natural coolness developed between him and Chadirchi, the most outspoken Reformist of the Cabinet, and then between him and the entire Reformist group. This rift between Hikmat and the Reformists, which at first manifested itself on the question of the general elections, passed through various stages. Abu 't-Timman, owing to his prestige with both Hikmat and the Reformists, always tried to reconcile them and to prevent a final parting. Matters, however, came to a head on the issue of the Diwaniya uprising when Abu 't-Timman himself disagreed with the Prime Minister and decided to resign, with his Reformist colleagues, from the Hikmat Cabinet.

It is now possible to view in retrospect the causes of the Reformist failure to realize their aspirations when they were in power. It has been argued that the Hikmat Government represented a Popular Front Government. Looked at only from a Reformist point of view, the Government was indeed intended to be a Popular Front after its contemporary French model, and the Reformists actually sought to organize a Popular Front movement in Iraq. While it is true that the new regime in Iraq was not a genuine popular movement, in the sense that it drew its strength from the people, the real danger for the Reformist movement was its unholy alliance with the army, who had for long cherished the ideal of military rule in Iraq and were by no means prepared, once they had seized power, to tolerate the establishment of a Popular Front Government in Iraq.

In the course of one of his conversations with Reformists, the writer questioned the possibility of achieving liberal reforms through the

<sup>1</sup> See *Ahali*, 19 and 23 Mar. 1937.

support of the army. Chadirchi pointed out that as a result of Bakr's pledge he had counted on the army's withdrawal from politics once the coup d'état had been achieved. Bakr might have been sincere in giving that pledge; but, it will be remembered, he was himself bound to take the army's aspirations and desires into consideration. Once it had achieved power, the army was not likely to withdraw from politics; it would rather tend to dominate them.

The Reformist-army alliance, therefore, was false and artificial, since they had nothing in common save their agreement to overthrow the Yasin-Rashid administration. It seems obvious enough that the Iraqi army's ideals and aspirations were far from being liberal. The army officers were intensely nationalist and sought to establish an unmistakable military dictatorship. The Reformists, on the other hand, preached the gospel of liberalism and democracy. Rejoicing in the successful achievement of the alliance, the Reformists could not at first see the impossibility of its survival; but when they fully realized it, they had no other alternative but to dissolve it.

#### TENSION BETWEEN THE TRIBAL SHAYKHS AND THE GOVERNMENT

Peace had not yet been restored to the tribal areas of the Middle Euphrates when the Government of the coup d'état was set up. Hikmat, who was one of the original promoters of the secret Sulaykh meetings aiming at arousing the tribes in order to force the 'Ali Jawdat Cabinet to resign, was to bear the evil consequences of that action when he himself came into power. It was indeed no difficult task to arouse the tribes of the Middle Euphrates to revolt, but it was increasingly difficult to control them once they had begun to rebel. The Yasin-Rashid administration, it will be recalled, decided to crush the tribal uprisings by force, but could not pacify the whole area.

When Hikmat had come into power order had not yet been fully restored to the Diwaniya *liwa* (province). He decided to solve the tribal problem peacefully and sympathetically. He pardoned all those who had revolted during former regimes, and ordered that all confiscated property of the rebels was to be restored. Both Hikmat and Bakr made an extensive tour in the Diwaniya *liwa* in February 1937, and gave audience to the shaykhs and tribal chiefs in order to impress them with the sincerity and good faith of the new Government. The Prime Minister made several public speeches promising reforms, and asked the tribes to keep order by appealing to their sense of patriotism



and reminding them of their contribution to the establishment of the national Government of Iraq by their revolt of 1920. Money as well as landed property was distributed among tribal shaykhs, both friends and enemies of the new regime, in order to win their loyalty to the Government.

There were, however, a number of difficulties to be tackled before Hikmat could claim to have solved the tribal problem. The tribes of the Middle Euphrates were susceptible to anti-Government propaganda owing to their miserable socio-economic conditions, which kept them invariably discontented. Hikmat was fully aware of that situation and consequently tried to introduce land reforms in order to ameliorate conditions. But the Government's new land policy, while it aimed at benefiting the rank and file of the tribes, was bitterly opposed by the tribal shaykhs, who feared both the eventual confiscation of their lands and the liberation of the peasants from their control.

The Government, therefore, had either to abandon its new land policy or to force the tribal shaykhs to approve it. At the outset General Bakr Sidqi was in favour of using force, but Hikmat preferred to attempt persuasion. He assured the shaykhs that their estates were to be left intact and gave lavish promises in return for support of the Government. Salih Jabr, the Minister of Justice, who, as a Shi'i, was *persona grata* with the Middle Euphrates shaykhs, brought such prominent men as Shaykh Abd al-Wahid Sikkar, Alwan al-Yasiri, and Muhsin Abu-Tabikh to a friendly gathering at his house where they had an intimate discussion of their problems with Hikmat and Bakr.<sup>1</sup> Another meeting was held at the Prime Minister's house. The shaykhs claimed that they only opposed the Communist tendencies (and certain arbitrary measures) of the Government.<sup>2</sup> Hikmat assured them that he had no intention of supporting a Communist policy and promised to reconcile their own interests with those of the Government. There were at that time certain long-standing boundary disputes which former Cabinets had tried to solve but were unable to without running counter to the interests of the shaykhs. These disputes had arisen more than a decade earlier, and the shaykhs counted on the formation of a friendly Cabinet to make a settlement in their favour. When the Yasin-Rashid Party came into power (supported by these shaykhs) the disputes were settled in their favour. The Hikmat

<sup>1</sup> Based on the writer's interview with Salih Jabr. Cf. Muhsin Abu Tabikh, *Kitab al-Mabadi' wa'r-Rijal* (Damascus, 1938), pp. 101-4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Cf. Abu Tabikh, *al-Mabadi'*, p. 104.

Government, however, declared that this settlement was unjust and must be reconsidered. The shaykhs were naturally not inclined to support a regime which threatened their interests. In the meetings at Jabr's house, however, Hikmat pledged himself to satisfy the interests of the shaykhs, and it seemed as if relations between the shaykhs and the Government were at last reconciled.

Basically, however, the conflict between the new Government and the shaykhs was more important than the question of boundary disputes; the large number of tribal shaykhs with their lieutenants, the *sargals*, feared that, even if their estates were left intact, the land policy of the new Government would undermine their authority over the tribes and would probably lead to an eventual dissolution of the tribal feudal order. Thus at heart the tribal shaykhs would approve nothing short of complete reversal of the new land policy and they threatened an armed uprising when the Government tried to enforce its policy.

To the outside observer it seems strange that the rank and file of the tribes should revolt against a Government which aimed at serving their best interests by liberating them from their masters. The Government's difficulty was that it had no means of coming into direct contact with the tribesmen, nor could it speak their unsophisticated language; the shaykhs, who had an absolute authority over them, could easily arouse the tribesmen by telling them that the Government wanted only to collect taxes and apply compulsory conscription. Taxes were sometimes relaxed in the interest of peace, but conscription was rigidly enforced, because it was regarded as a principle of national policy and essential to the enlargement of the army. The Government had often been compelled to impose conscription by force when the opposing tribal shaykhs refused co-operation.

Matters came to a head in May 1937 when the Government decided to strike at an impending tribal uprising in Diwaniya. It was noticed that the tribal shaykhs had increased their activities in that area and that arms were being secretly distributed among the tribes. Bakr and his general staff decided to strike. Hikmat approved, and decided to arrest the leaders, including those who were members of Parliament.<sup>1</sup> The decision to send forces to Diwaniya, it seems, was carried

<sup>1</sup> Three leaders were members of Parliament, namely, Senator Muhsin Abu Tabikh, and deputies Abd al-Wahid Sikkar, and Alwan al-Yasiri. The Prime Minister requested Parliament to deprive these leaders of their parliamentary immunity, which was done, and they were put in Government custody at a distance from the area of the revolt. For statements by the Prime Minister to this

out before it was submitted to the Cabinet for approval. When the news of the dispatch of forces reached certain Cabinet Ministers, a meeting of the Cabinet was held and the Reformist ministers, together with Salih Jabr, pleaded for conciliation with the tribes, Hikmat and Bakr thought otherwise and had already decided to use force. Jabr sided with the Reformists, who had already made up their minds to withdraw, and four ministers threatened resignation. They actually tendered their resignations on 19 June 1937, and withdrew from the Cabinet. (A full account of these resignations is given in the following section.)

When Hikmat and Bakr arrested the tribal chiefs, the tribes of Samawa (in the Diwaniya *liwa*) were incensed and the rebellion which was being prepared in secret openly raised its head. There had already been war-dances among tribesmen (protesting against compulsory conscription and threatening with their songs) 'Those who impose conscription, let them come!' The resignation of the four ministers had weakened Hikmat's position and he was compelled to promise conciliation with the tribes to the new ministers who joined his reconstructed Cabinet. From May to August the situation did not improve, in spite of Hikmat's appeal to the tribes for conciliation. The fall of Hikmat's Cabinet relieved the tension and the matter was dealt with more peacefully by the subsequent Cabinet.

#### HIKMAT'S FINAL PARTING WITH THE REFORMISTS

The Reformists had long believed that their cause was lost by the collaboration of Hikmat and the army, but their leader, Abu 't-Timman, did not entirely lose hope and counted on his ability to reconcile both Hikmat and Bakr with his colleagues. Matters, however, came to a head on the issue of the Diwaniya uprising when the fall of the Reformists was effected. This came more quickly than they expected; the Minister of Justice, Salih Jabr, a non-Reformist member of the Cabinet, joined hands with them on the Diwaniya issue and decided to resign with them. Jabr who, it will be recalled, had worked for the reconciliation of the tribal chiefs with Bakr and Hikmat, had no faith in Bakr and suspected his intentions towards the tribes.

Abu 't-Timman, though a moderate leader of the Reformists, emerged as the champion of the schism in the Cabinet and was almost successful in causing the fall of Hikmat's Cabinet by inducing effect in both houses of Parliament, see *Proc. Senate*, 1937, pp. 44-46; and *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 1937, pp. 156-8.

four out of seven members of the Cabinet to resign. He called the opposing ministers to a meeting at his house on 19 June 1937, and the four ministers (Abu 't-Timman, Chadirchi, Jabr, and Yusuf 'Izz ad-Din Ibrahim) decided to resign. Abu 't-Timman drew up the letter of resignation, which the other three ministers approved and signed, and it was at once sent to the Prime Minister. The text of the letter follows:

In view of the fact that the aspirations of the country, for which we have so often made sacrifices, for matters such as welfare, security, and justice for all, have not been realized; and since the proper and peaceful arrangements which we have decided to carry out for the security of the country, which were approved by the public and for long had the good results which the public awaited, have been unfortunately reversed and have led to bloodshed, owing to arrangements which were kept secret to us until it was no longer possible to keep them secret; and since the policy of nepotism has been continued, which is inconsistent with the proper policy which sincere men should follow; we have therefore found that there would no longer be any use in bearing further responsibility and we have [therefore] respectfully decided to resign.

Despite his unsuccessful endeavours to persuade the four ministers to withdraw their letter of resignation, Hikmat did not resign himself, though only three out of seven ministers remained in the Cabinet. He invited several other persons to join his Cabinet and thus it was reconstructed. Ali Mahmud, of the Istiqlal group, was given the portfolio of Justice; Muhammad Ali Mahmud had the portfolio of Finance; Abbas Mahdi took the portfolio of Public Works; and Ja'far Hamandi was given the portfolio of Education. The new ministers agreed to join only on condition that the Cabinet would follow an anti-Reformist policy and would take a more lenient attitude towards the Diwaniya uprising.

The Istiqlal group and the nationalists had finally won; for the reconstructed Hikmat Cabinet not only repudiated the Reformists' ideas, but Hikmat declared in Parliament in no uncertain terms that his policy was intensely nationalist and that he would oppose those who professed liberal ideas. In order to satisfy the nationalists, Hikmat deported from Iraq Deputy Abd al-Qadir Isma'il (one of his staunch Reformist supporters), and Isma'il's brother, after having deprived them of their Iraqi nationality. He also promised to dissolve Parliament in order to get rid of its Reformist members. The Popular Reform Society was abolished and the leading members were either banished from the country, as was Chadirchi, or persecuted and disgraced.



Hikmat's final parting with the Reformists meant that the Cabinet had finally become subservient to the army and the nationalists. Since the trend of events was unmistakably to concentrate power in the hands of the army, rumours were circulated about the impending dictatorship of Bakr Sidqi. The doors to supreme authority were thrown open to the army, but proper leadership to achieve effective control was apparently lacking. While many admirers looked upon Bakr as the would-be dictator, he was himself, it seems, reluctant to assume that role. His assassination put an end to the talk of a military dictatorship, though the army's interference in politics continued to be the most important factor in the political life of Iraq.

#### ASSASSINATION OF BAKR SIDQI

From the day when the coup d'état was successfully carried out, the army officers began to take full advantage of their enhanced prestige. The licentious indulgence of Bakr, and especially of some of his irresponsible entourage, which reminded the older generation of the corruption and outrages of the Turkish army officers under the Ottoman regime, increasingly aroused the disgust and hatred of the people. Some cynical critics remarked that Bakr's entourage had played the role of the modern janissary by their behaviour. This led to a deterioration of the army's reputation and the waning of Bakr's prestige.

Hikmat's final parting with the Reformists, on the other hand, virtually meant that Bakr and his party had become the supreme authority behind the Government and that Hikmat's remaining in power depended on Bakr's support. Rumours were circulated that Bakr had not only become 'dictator' in fact but was also contemplating becoming it in name. Such rumours, it is true, were mere propaganda; but it is safe to argue that Hikmat, having parted ways with the Reformists and having no genuine support from nationalist ranks, must have fully realized that his power rested entirely on the support of Bakr's party. He was accordingly bound to satisfy Bakr and the army not only by the approval of large financial appropriations for the strengthening of the army but also by suppressing the alleged Communist movement and expelling Abd al-Qadir Isma'il.

Yet it is reported to the writer by a few men who knew General Bakr Sidqi intimately that not only had he no such designs, but also his own personal interests were along different lines. Bakr was pre-occupied with achieving his ideal of strengthening and reorganizing

the army, and, with all his keen interest in the political development of his country, he had no desire to take part in practical politics. Several members of Hikmat's Cabinet have assured the writer that Bakr neither tried to interfere in the Cabinet's deliberations nor, as was unjustifiably rumoured, attended meetings of the Council of Ministers.<sup>1</sup>

To argue, therefore, that Bakr deliberately sought to establish a dictatorship may not be quite correct; but the trend in the political development of the country was unmistakably towards a dictatorship. Retrospectively, it is no difficult task for the keen eye to discern a gradual shift in the incidence of political power from civilian to military hands; and it has become almost an axiom that the future fate of the country rested in the hands of the army. Had Bakr lived longer, it may be plausibly argued, he would have been bound to be the dictator, since he was not only the foremost army officer but unquestionably the most powerful as well.

The people's fear of an impending military dictatorship was, therefore, no idle talk; but it is an over-simplification to reduce this threat merely to the ambition of an army officer who deliberately planned to set up a dictatorship. General Bakr's alleged ambition, however, caused the public to begin to talk of 'the impossibility of dictatorship in Iraq', and to argue from Arab history that dictators always ruled for a very short time, because they were inevitably killed in the end. Not only were such indirect warnings made to Bakr, but the idea of 'getting rid of Bakr' was often whispered secretly, and this did not fail to reach his ears, while certain plans were made to assassinate him.

Nor was this all. Bakr, feeling uneasy about his opponents, began to consider a 'black list', which included names of both his military and civilian enemies whom he wanted to get rid of by assassination. Bakr's secret plans were not always kept strictly secret, however, while the exaggerated rumours which circulated created an atmosphere of confusion and personal insecurity. This undoubtedly further incited his enemies seriously to consider ways and means of getting rid of him. A number of plots were made, but all were difficult to carry out since it had become increasingly difficult to see Bakr alone and unprotected or even to know exactly where he was after he

<sup>1</sup> For the clarification of this point the writer has depended on the authority of some neutral members of Hikmat's Cabinet such as Dr Naji al-Asil and Ja'far Hamandi as well as on Bakr's opponents in that Cabinet, such as Chadirchi and Salih Jabr.

had left his office. The General was fully aware of the growing number of his opponents among the army officers but he was very well safeguarded by a powerful and loyal bodyguard. It was therefore almost impossible for Bakr's enemies to carry out any plan successfully while the General remained in the capital.

The opportune moment, however, finally came when the Iraqi Government decided to send Bakr as head of a military mission to attend army manoeuvres in Thrace on 18 August 1937, in response to an official invitation from the Turkish Government. Bakr left Baghdad on 10 August and arrived at Mosul on the following day via Kirkuk. His most intimate friend and associate, Major Muhammad 'Ali Jawad, commander of the Iraqi Royal Air Force, went in person by air on 11 August in order to see the General off. After his arrival in Mosul on 11 August, Bakr and a few of his friends decided to spend the afternoon of that day at the Mosul aerodrome, because the Mosul Rest House was crowded and the General was tired and in need of relaxation. While he and his friends were chatting leisurely, a soldier, called Muhammad 'Ali Talla'fari, suddenly appeared unnoticed in front of Bakr. He broke up the happy gathering by firing two shots at Bakr which killed him instantly. Major Jawad, who hurriedly jumped up to rescue his friend and master, was also immediately killed. Thus the spectacular life of General Bakr Sidqi, which had become almost legendary, suddenly came to an end scarcely ten months after his celebrated march on Baghdad. The bodies of the General and his lieutenant were brought to Baghdad in a military plane on 12 August and buried with full military honours.

The plan of assassination was an elaborate and carefully considered one. Seven prominent army officers took part in its preparation, the most important among them being 'Aziz Yamulki, Muhammad Khorshid, Mahmud Hindi, and Fahmi Sa'id. When the news of Bakr's sudden appearance at the Mosul aerodrome reached one of the seven plotters, Muhammad Khorshid, the opportunity was at once seized.<sup>1</sup> For a time the origin of the plot remained a mystery to most

<sup>1</sup> I have it on 'Aziz Yamulki's own authority that four plans were made to carry out the plot of assassination: one was to kill him at the Mosul Rest House; the second, at his brother's house, in case Bakr decided to spend the day with his brother Barqi; the third, by an attack on Bakr's car on his way to Tel-Kutchuk; and the fourth, which was considered the master-plan, at the Military Club where it was planned to entertain Bakr in the evening of the day of his arrival. 'Aziz Yamulki, then president of the club, was to give a secret signal and the assassination was to take place when the lights were to be put out.

people, but Bakr's entourage were well aware that it was the work of their opponents.

#### A COUP D'ÉTAT TO END THE REGIME OF THE COUP D'ÉTAT

The assassination of Bakr marked the culmination of a struggle between two contending parties within the army, Bakr's followers and his nationalist opponents. Hikmat, who had become entirely dependent on Bakr's party, was confronted with a very awkward situation: he had either to adopt a high-handed policy against Bakr's enemies in order to satisfy his supporters, or resign. He tried to follow the first course of action, but the firm stand of Bakr's opponents forced him to resign.

When the news of Bakr's assassination reached Hikmat, he at once discussed the matter with the Acting Minister of Defence,<sup>1</sup> and it was decided that a military court was to be set up and a full investigation made. Preliminary investigations were made by both Hamdi Zaynal, of the Mosul Force, and Antoine Luqa, who was sent from Baghdad. Their investigations were extensive and almost uncovered the secret of the plot. They therefore ordered the arrest of the ringleaders. Under the influence of Bakr's party in Baghdad, the Prime Minister ordered that all those accused should be sent to Baghdad for trial.

The authors of the plot were not unaware of their grave danger, but were prepared to meet any contingency that might arise. They kept silent during the initial investigations, but when the Prime Minister demanded that they be sent to Baghdad for trial, they decided to raise a military rebellion in Mosul and demand the resignation of the Hikmat Cabinet. Amin al-'Umari, officer commanding the Mosul Forces, was compelled, under the threat or persuasion of the seven ringleaders, to issue a manifesto in which he declared that he would no longer obey the orders of the Cabinet. The text of the manifesto follows:

Following the assassination of the late Bakr Sidqi and Muhammad 'Ali Jawad, investigations were conducted in a satisfactory way. The murderer and his instigators were arrested, and the investigations were conducted in such a manner as to confine their scope only to those who committed [the murder] and the instigators. The Cabinet in Baghdad, however, and those who have disguised aims decided to arrest a number of officers who

<sup>1</sup> Owing to the absence on leave of Abd al-Latif Nuri, Minister of Defence, the portfolio of Defence was given to 'Ali Mahmud, Minister of Justice, in an acting capacity.



had no connexion at all with the affair. In spite of our advice to the Cabinet that the incident should not be made a pretext for the punishment of innocent [officers], the Cabinet insisted on its demand to have these officers arrested and to have other innocent officers sent to Baghdad. The army has accordingly raised a revolt in order to protect its innocent officers. We have decided to take this responsibility and have severed our relations with Baghdad in order to stop the innocent officers from being sent. The people are required to keep order and to abstain from doing anything that might disturb the peace.

Mosul, 14 August 1937.

The move of the Mosul Command against the Cabinet was not made without previous consultation with commanders who were opposed to Bakr's party in certain other *liwas* of Iraq. 'Umari had contacted the commanders of the Diwaniya, Kirkuk, and Sulaimaniya forces, and secured their approval and support for his move against the Government. Thus, under the pretext of avoiding civil war, the main body of the Iraqi army refused to support the Cabinet's attitude towards the officers of the Mosul Command.

In the capital rumours had spread that civil war was inevitable owing to the determination of Bakr's followers to punish all those concerned with the assassination. Bakr's followers, it seems, thought that the opportune moment had come to purge the army of their opponents who had long been intriguing against them. Prime Minister Hikmat Sulayman might not have been willing to resort to force with its inevitable consequence of a civil war, but the influence of Bakr's party was then paramount in the capital and might have taken control of the Government in order to enforce its policy. The most important army officers of that party were Isma'il Haqqi, who took over the leadership of the group, and Shakir al-Wadi, who occupied the position of Muhammad Ali Jawad. These two prominent officers dominated affairs in Baghdad and exercised great influence on the Prime Minister. Though there were a few army officers opposed to them, it looked as if the entire army in the capital had become subservient to them. With such a stubborn stand on the part of both the Baghdad and Mosul forces, civil war seemed indeed inevitable.

(However, one portion of the Baghdad forces suddenly emerged in favour of the Mosul Command and consequently turned the balance against Bakr's followers.) The officer commanding the Washshash Camp (on the outskirts of the capital), Sa'id Tikriti, unexpectedly declared that he was not in favour of a civil war and daringly defied the central command of the capital. On 14 August he called his fellow

officers at Washshash to a meeting and discussed the situation with them. Since it was unanimously agreed that the Iraqi army should never be divided and that civil war was to be avoided at all costs, Tikriti was charged with the leadership of the rebellious army in the capital and he at once declared that he no longer obeyed orders from the capital. He announced that he supported the attitude of the Mosul Command.

Upon hearing the unpleasant news of the Washshash rebellion, the Prime Minister and his Acting Minister of Defence went in person to the Washshash Camp in order to persuade Tikriti to change his mind. Hikmat assured Tikriti that there was no question of civil war and promised him to restrain Bakr's followers. Tikriti was apparently too resolutely opposed to the Bakr party and would not let the opportunity pass without making his obedience to the Government conditional on the temporary removal from their posts of certain army officers of Bakr's party until the situation had reverted to normal. The Diwaniya Command had already assured Tikriti of its support and demanded the removal of Bakr's followers from power. To all intents and purposes the main body of the Iraqi army had suddenly expressed its aversion to Bakr's party and was determined to avoid civil war.

In these circumstances the Prime Minister at last found himself helpless, since Bakr's party had become almost isolated and powerless. The King, it seems, had discovered the futility of the Cabinet's insistence on demanding that Bakr's assassins be sent to Baghdad, and decided to accept the proposals of 'Umari and Tikriti. Hikmat accordingly decided to resign. He tendered his resignation on 17 August, and it was accepted at once.

On the same day the King invited Jamil al-Midfa'i to form a new Cabinet. Midfa'i, who had only two days before been called from Syria to join the Hikmat Cabinet as Minister of Defence in order to relieve the situation, was a moderate politician who was on friendly terms with almost all public men. On the same day that Hikmat resigned, 'Umari issued from his Mosul headquarters the following declaration: 'In view of the disappearance of the causes which prompted the army to interfere in politics, matters have become normal. I therefore announce to the people that the situation has become entirely normal; relations with the capital have been re-established; and warning orders to the army are withdrawn.' Tikriti, in like manner, ordered his forces to return to normal and offered

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Upon hearing the unpleasant news of the Washshash rebellion, the Prime Minister and his Acting Minister of Defence went in person to the Washshash Camp in order to persuade Tikriti to change his mind. Hikmat assured Tikriti that there was no question of civil war and promised him to restrain Bakr's followers. Tikriti was apparently too resolutely opposed to the Bakr party and would not let the opportunity pass without making his obedience to the Government conditional on the temporary removal from their posts of certain army officers of Bakr's party until the situation had reverted to normal. The Diwaniya Command had already assured Tikriti of its support and demanded the removal of Bakr's followers from power. To all intents and purposes the main body of the Iraqi army had suddenly expressed its aversion to Bakr's party and was determined to avoid civil war.

In these circumstances the Prime Minister at last found himself helpless, since Bakr's party had become almost isolated and powerless. The King, it seems, had discovered the futility of the Cabinet's insistence on demanding that Bakr's assassins be sent to Baghdad, and decided to accept the proposals of 'Umari and Tikriti. Hikmat accordingly decided to resign. He tendered his resignation on 17 August, and it was accepted at once.

On the same day the King invited Jamil al-Midfa'i to form a new Cabinet. Midfa'i, who had only two days before been called from Syria to join the Hikmat Cabinet as Minister of Defence in order to relieve the situation, was a moderate politician who was on friendly terms with almost all public men. On the same day that Hikmat resigned, 'Umari issued from his Mosul headquarters the following declaration: 'In view of the disappearance of the causes which prompted the army to interfere in politics, matters have become normal. I therefore announce to the people that the situation has become entirely normal; relations with the capital have been re-established; and warning orders to the army are withdrawn.' Tikriti, in like manner, ordered his forces to return to normal and offered



his obedience to the new Cabinet. Thus the crisis passed, and the Government formed through a military coup d'état needed another coup d'état for its dissolution.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MILITARY COUP D'ÉTAT

The first military coup d'état, originating from new sources of political power, produced an almost complete change in the operation of the machinery of government. No other incident, since the establishment of the kingdom in 1921, had such far-reaching effects on the internal politics of Iraq. The significance, as well as the effects, of this coup can be summed up as follows.

First, it eliminated the leadership of a set of moderate nationalists that had just established itself in authority and sought to maintain a healthy balance between the advocates of pan-Arab ideas and Iraqi particularism. The disappearance of this leadership produced dissension and rivalry between these two schools of thought which affected the course of political development. The death of Yasin al-Hashimi, soon after his Cabinet was overthrown, and the assassination of General Ja'far al-Askari eliminated two of the most outstanding moderate leaders who commanded the respect of divergent nationalist groupings. This leadership had maintained correct and friendly relations with the Powers in treaty relations with Iraq, in particular with Great Britain. The elimination of Generals Yasin and Ja'far, who exercised restraining influence on nationalist groupings, resulted in the ultimate rise of two rival leaders, General Nuri as-Sa'id and Rashid Ali, who in their struggle for power pursued divergent viewpoints in foreign policy which endangered the very existence of the State.

Secondly, it introduced the army as a new factor in politics and tended to transform the Government into a military dictatorship. Lack of leadership after the assassination of General Bakr Sidqi left the army divided, while jealousy among the leading army officers induced each faction to support a different set of civilian politicians. The army, though it had failed to establish a *bona fide* military rule, continued to influence the course of internal politics from behind the scenes. The army indeed became virtually the sole deciding factor in the rise and fall of almost all Cabinets from 1937 to 1941. This naturally created instability in administration and led to the recurrence of military coups d'état. The first coup, while it was welcomed as a means of getting rid of an undesirable Cabinet, set a bad precedent for the

intervention of the army in politics; the move indeed became impossible to stop and led to six more military coups up to 1941. The seventh, culminating in a conflict on the application of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, met utter failure in a war with a foreign Power.

Thirdly, it offered the Reformists, Iraq's embryonic liberal grouping, an opportunity to try out their reform programme. They failed not only because they misjudged the forces that helped to bring them into power, but the experiment demonstrated also that the country was not yet ready for them. It is to be noted, however, that in 1936 liberalism lost ground not only in Iraq and the Middle East but also in many Western countries, where the anti-democratic forces were in full swing. Military and Fascist ideas had caught the imagination of many people and liberalism was much discredited. The fall of the Reformists from power, demonstrating the failure of their moderate approach to reform, encouraged their extremists to assert more radical ideas of reform and prepared the way, in particular during the Second World War, for the rapid spread of Communism.

Finally, from the time when the army staged the first military coup d'état Iraq was looked upon by many Arab ideological groupings as the future Arab Prussia which would not only emancipate the other Arab countries from Western imperialism but would also unify the Arab world under one central authority. After the assassination of Bakr Sidqi, who himself helped to raise such high hopes by a display of anti-British feeling, the pan-Arab elements in the army became instruments in the hands of ideological leaders. Although keenly interested in the internal politics of their country they betrayed a lack of understanding of foreign policy. Thus when the army officers completely dominated the political process, their judgement as to how they should conduct the foreign policy of Iraq brought them into conflict with Britain, which ended in the overthrow of the regime they had established.

## CHAPTER VII

### FURTHER COUPS D'ÉTAT. I

1937-40

WHILE the army's counter coup d'état almost completely eliminated Bakr Sidqi's party and put an end to an impending military dictatorship, it by no means restored civilian rule. It would be a mistake to regard the army's counter coup as evidence of repentance for elevating to power a group of army officers who had disgraced its reputation; for this coup was in fact not a reaction against the army's interference in politics but against General Bakr's own followers—who, by their misconduct and lack of political prudence, aroused the antagonism of many an army officer. The anti-Bakr party, it is true, swore to their new nominee to the premiership that they would withdraw to their army camps, leaving politics to the civilian politicians; but this party, when the Premier's decisions ran contrary to their desires, did not hesitate to interfere in politics. For a short while, when the public was still disgusted with the manner in which Bakr's party controlled the Government, the anti-Bakr party declared that the army would no longer interfere in politics, but their self-restraint was short-lived.

#### POLICY OF COMPROMISE

With the ending of the Hikmat-Bakr regime it was suggested, and tacitly approved by the nation, that Iraq was in need of a moderate Cabinet that would restore order and ensure justice rather than a vindictive Government which would take up past injustices and punish those responsible. The choice thus naturally fell on Jamil al-Midfa'i, who was almost unanimously accepted as the most suitable candidate in the circumstances. Although Midfa'i was reproached by his opponents for inefficiency and lack of political prudence, he was certainly praised for his straightforwardness and transparent honesty, and acted to the best of his abilities to maintain order and justice.<sup>1</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> Sir Maurice Peterson, His Majesty's Ambassador to Iraq, with whom the Midfa'i Cabinet maintained an excellent relationship, went so far in his praise of Midfa'i as to say: [He] had matured into a statesmanship which I came to regard

wisely regarded both the Yasin-Rashid usurpation of power and the Hikmat-Bakr coup as the result of the action and reaction of two contentious issues which should be forgotten. He admitted, it is true, that the two regimes had made their own mistakes with evil consequences, but he contended that by following a policy aptly called that of 'forgetting the past'<sup>1</sup> he would contribute to the stability and progress of Iraq. Thus the Midfa'i compromise arose from practical consideration of the circumstances as well as from the personal conviction and character of the new Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup>

The policy of forgetting the past was manifested by deciding on certain measures which Midfa'i tried to the best of his ability to carry out. The *émigrés* were allowed to return from exile, but were not permitted to engage in vindictive activities against the former followers of the Hikmat-Bakr regime. Members of the former Chamber and certain prominent *émigrés* composed the new Parliament, which met on 23 December 1937. Only those members of the former Chamber who were outspoken supporters of Bakr Sidqi, as well as the Reformists, were excluded. General Ja'far al-Askari's body, which had been disgracefully buried outside Baghdad during Bakr's march on Baghdad, was removed and reinterred at the royal mausoleum with full military honours on 4 October. The Cabinet was then urged to bring the ignoble murderers of the General to trial, but it was soon realized that under the Public Amnesty Law, passed by Parliament under the Hikmat-Bakr regime, it was impossible to bring a case against them.

While the policy of forgetting the past was on the whole faithfully carried out, it was no easy task to restrain recriminations when certain members of Parliament severely criticized the former regime. The Prime Minister often appealed to them in the interest of their country

as placing him head and shoulders above other politicians of Iraq, not excluding even Nuri Said' (Sir Maurice Peterson, *Both Sides of the Curtain* (London, 1950), p. 138).

<sup>1</sup> *Siyasat Isdal as-Sitar* (policy of dropping the curtain).

<sup>2</sup> In a note written to the present writer in Midfa'i's own hand, dated 28 May 1947, he stated that owing to a schism in the group which might have led to a conflict between Bakr's followers and their opponents, he sought, by following a policy of *Isdal as-Sitar* (forgetting the past), to restore order and tranquillity. Midfa'i contended, likewise, that it was unjust to give way to the followers of Bakr and punish Bakr's assassins, while those who assassinated General Ja'far al-Askari and others (at the instigation of Bakr) were pardoned. Midfa'i's own solution of the crisis, therefore, was to prevent both camps from taking any hostile action against one another. He also stated that he was given assurances by the leading army officers that they would no longer interfere in politics.



to avoid discussion of the past and to observe his policy of forgetting it. In the Chamber of Deputies one of the members, Da'ud as-Sa'di, made a speech on 29 December in which he violently denounced the former regime as Communistic and attacked the Midfa'i Cabinet for not punishing its followers.<sup>1</sup> On 4 April 1938 another member, Rustum Haydar, former Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, in an angry and impassioned outburst pleaded for the indulgence of the House for a moment to ignore the policy of forgetting the past. His scathing attack on the Hikmat-Bakr regime led to accusations and counter-accusations between him and Muhammad Ali Mahmud, Minister of Finance under the former regime, and also between General Taha al-Hashimi, former Chief of the General Staff, and other members. Finding that his policy of forgetting the past was completely disregarded, the Prime Minister protested, and prevailed over the disputants by a display of public spirit.<sup>2</sup> During the debate in the Senate, however, he himself lost his temper and in like manner indulged in vain personal recriminations. In the course of a debate on the new Public Amnesty Law, both Senators Mahmud Subhi ad-Daftari and Rashid Ali al-Gaylani argued that to pardon persons who took part in a military coup d'état was not a far-sighted policy, because it would inevitably lead to further coups d'état. Rashid Ali went so far as to declare bluntly and impetuously that he did not believe in the soundness of the policy of forgetting the past. He had already proposed, he asserted, to bring to trial all those who were directly responsible for political crimes against the State. This allusion to political crimes exhausted the patience of the Prime Minister, who in reply hinted that Rashid Ali had himself committed similar actions against former Cabinets.<sup>3</sup> A verbal duel ensued between Midfa'i and Rashid Ali until it was cut short by one of the senators, who proposed ending further discussion of the subject.<sup>4</sup>

The Midfa'i Government, it is true, was able to restore order and security, but in fact it did nothing constructive to promote the development of the parliamentary system of Iraq, nor did it set an example in

<sup>1</sup> Owing to the vulgarity and violent tone of the speech, the house voted to expel Sa'di for the rest of the session. See *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 8th (Extraord.) Sess., 1937, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 8th Sess., 1937-8, pp. 290-4, 345-8, 350-1.

<sup>3</sup> In this rather ambiguous statement Midfa'i intended to remind Rashid Ali that he (Midfa'i) was the subject of previous plots committed by Rashid Ali himself (see p. 49 above).

<sup>4</sup> *Proc. Senate*, 8th Sess., 1937-8, pp. 76-79, 80-82.

tolerating opposition through constitutional procedure. Its political opponents, mainly made up of members of the pre-Bakr regime, began to criticize the Government in Parliament and the press, and impatiently hoped for a Cabinet change in order that they might return to power. Since Parliament was always dominated by the executive, and the agitation in the press aroused the hostility of the Cabinet, it was soon realized that any Cabinet change would not be achieved through constitutional procedure.

Opposition to the Government came from two main groups. The first was made up of Generals Nuri and Taha who, with several leading army officers (Fahmi Sa'id, Mahmud Salman, Salah ad-Din as-Sabbagh, and others), formed a secret ring and agreed that the army should again intervene to carry out a Cabinet change. Nuri, it seems, promised that no governmental change should be made until the leading army officers had been consulted.<sup>1</sup> From the time when Midfa'i formed his Government, Nuri was not expected to remain idle in Baghdad; Midfa'i therefore appointed him Minister to Egypt. But Nuri directed his opposition to Midfa'i through General Taha, who acted as the link between Nuri and the army officers. In November 1938, when Nuri returned to Baghdad, he sent a message to Sir Maurice Peterson, the British Ambassador, in the hope of obtaining his approval for army action; but Peterson discouraged him.<sup>2</sup> In December, however, when the schism in the army became serious, Nuri's supporters lost no time in proceeding to carry out their plot against Midfa'i.

The second opposing group, also made up in the main of the followers of the pre-Bakr regime, supported Rashid Ali and secretly distributed leaflets denouncing the Midfa'i Cabinet. When this group began to throw explosive materials in certain public places of the capital in order to stir up hostility against the Government, the Midfa'i Cabinet dealt promptly and firmly with its active members. News had already reached the Government that Rashid Ali and his followers were restless. The Council of Ministers thus decided on 12 December to apply the so-called Seditious Propaganda Law,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. The Memoirs of Colonel Salah ad-Din as-Sabbagh, *Fursan al-'Uruba Fi al-Iraq* (Damascus, 1956; later referred to as Sabbagh, *Memoirs*), pp. 70-71.

<sup>2</sup> 'I was helpless in bed', related Sir Maurice Peterson in his memoirs (pp. 141-2), 'when a cryptic message reached me from Nuri Said indicating that that restless brain was planning a disturbance. I sent back a message entreating Nuri not to seek to reintroduce the element of violence into Iraqi politics. . . . To this message I received no reply and Nuri himself retired again to Egypt.'

passed by Parliament only a few months earlier, which empowered the Government to arrest mischief-makers and put them under police surveillance in distant localities. Rashid Ali and a few of his followers were immediately arrested and sent to various distant places outside the capital where they were placed under strict police supervision.

This action of the Midfa'i Government neither put an end to secret opposition, since the Government was quite unaware of the activities of the Nuri group, nor restored order and stability. When Parliament reconvened, after the fall of Midfa'i, he was severely censured for arresting certain members of Parliament (Rashid Ali and others) who were considered to enjoy parliamentary immunity.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE THIRD COUP D'ÉTAT

Nevertheless the acid test of Midfa'i's policy of forgetting the past should be sought not in the re-establishment of parliamentary rule, since there was no true parliamentary life before the first coup d'état, but in its ability to keep the army out of politics. Midfa'i, as has been stated, accepted office only on the understanding that the army officers would no longer interfere in politics. It was tacitly implicit in this policy that Midfa'i would neither punish the Hikmat-Bakr group nor allow the anti-Bakr party to influence his administration. He endeavoured to keep the balance among the army officers by placing a few of them on the retired list, including General Abd al-Latif Nuri, Bakr Sidqi's partner in the first military coup, and appointing General Husayn Fawzi, a neutral army officer, to the position of Chief of the General Staff, and Nazif ash-Shawi, an old friend of Midfa'i, as Assistant Chief of Staff. Several other transfers in high army posts were made in order to please the anti-Bakr group. Amin al-'Umari, who led the revolt against Hikmat Sulayman in Mosul, was appointed officer commanding the First Infantry Division; Salah ad-Din as-Sabbagh as Director of Military Operations; Mahmud Salman as officer commanding Mechanized Forces; Kamil Shabib as Commandant of the Infantry; and Aziz Yamulki as officer commanding Mechanical Transport. Midfa'i believed that these appointments would placate the army officers, while his assumption of the portfolio of Defence, in addition to the premiership, would enable him to keep the army immune from the intrigues of his rival political opponents.

<sup>1</sup> The Seditious Propaganda Law was submitted to the High Court, after Midfa'i's fall, and was declared unconstitutional and repealed on 11 Sept. 1939.

Midfa'i's handling of the army problem was so palpably superficial as to cast serious doubt on his understanding of the issues involved. He owed his own elevation to power to the army, and therefore his policy was bound to fail if it ran counter to the wishes of the army officers. Thereafter Midfa'i had to choose either invariably to please the dominant party in the army, or to crush it. His 'compromise' was doomed to failure because he did neither. Possibly he expected that the army officers would fulfil their pledge of withdrawing from politics. If they did not, Midfa'i contended, it would be because they were influenced by his political opponents. His handling of the crisis, therefore, when it recurred, was merely to arrest those civilian politicians whom he suspected of having induced several army officers to rise against the Government.

So long as the dominant party in the army was united the Midfa'i Cabinet remained secure from trouble. But jealousies among certain leading army officers no less than their disagreement as to whom they should support among the civilian politicians soon led to the division of the dominant party into two groups. There were, in the first place, those army officers who were directly responsible for the plot against Bakr and were determined to control the army. The leaders of this group were Sabbagh, Salman, Sa'id, Shabib, and Yamulki. These officers prevailed on Husayn Fawzi and Amin al-'Umari, who were rather unpolitically minded and inclined to be neutral, to join their group and form an inner ring of 'Seven'. In the second place, there was a smaller group which had also been anti-Bakr, but was not friendly to the Seven. Some of them, such as Nazif ash-Shawi, Sa'id Tikriti, and Yusuf al-Azzawi, were old friends of Midfa'i, whose ear was ever ready to listen to their whispers. This aroused the suspicions of the Seven and aggravated the schism in the army.<sup>1</sup>

The inner discontent of the Seven was fomented when Midfa'i relinquished the portfolio of Defence to a new minister, Colonel Sabih Najib, after a Cabinet reshuffle on 30 October 1938.<sup>2</sup> Colonel

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sabbagh, who shifts the responsibility of the schism to Midfa'i on the grounds that his Cabinet sought control of the army by dividing the army officers into two factions (*Memoirs*, p. 68).

<sup>2</sup> The Cabinet reshuffle was the result of an intensive rivalry between two prominent ministers in the Cabinet (Mustafa al-'Umari, Minister of Interior, and Ibrahim Kamal, Minister of Finance) who were competing as possible successors to their chief. A campaign in the press against 'Umari's alleged corruption resulted in the imprisonment of the editor of *Istiqlal*, but it did not put an end to the rivalry. 'Umari was transferred to Justice and Midfa'i himself took over Interior, giving Defence to Colonel Sabih Najib.



Najib, after long service in the army, was first appointed as Director-General of Police and then to a post in the Foreign Office. Owing to his allegedly arrogant attitude to senior army officers, and to his display of unfriendliness towards the Seven, the appointment of Najib to the portfolio of Defence precipitated the crisis. Najib apparently believed that he could break the power of the Seven, but he was in fact entirely unequal to the task. His attitude betrayed a just but ungenerous spirit of revenge when the care of a reformer was required. Najib's arrogant and threatening attitude towards the Seven, who flattered themselves on having elevated his master to power, decisively alienated their sympathies and encouraged them to throw in their lot with Midfa'i's political opponents. These, it will be recalled, were anxiously waiting to seize such an opportunity in order to achieve power. Contact between the Seven and Nuri's group was maintained with complete secrecy: General Taha al-Hashimi, whose military training and former contact with the army gave him the reputation of a military hero, always acted as Nuri's deputy. Colonel Fahmi Sa'id, Mahmud Salman, and Aziz Yamulki conducted, on behalf of the Seven, secret negotiations with General Taha.<sup>1</sup> It did not take long to come to a tacit understanding to use the army to compel Midfa'i to resign. Such a political bargain would relieve the Seven of the hostility of Najib, while the enhancement of their prestige and power by carrying out another coup d'état attracted them.

Matters came to a head when secret news reached the Seven of an impending move by the Cabinet to place a few army officers on the retired list. Colonel Sabbagh immediately called his fellow colleagues to a meeting in his office at noon on 24 December, but only five of the Seven attended (Husayn Fawzi and 'Umari were not present).<sup>2</sup> It did not take long to come to a decision to overthrow the Midfa'i Cabinet by force; it was decided to concentrate the forces at the Rashid Camp and orders were issued putting them on the alert. In the afternoon all preparations were completed and General Husayn Fawzi, who had

<sup>1</sup> In his *Memoirs* (pp. 68-70), Sabbagh gives seven reasons for his group's opposition to Midfa'i: (1) the policy of the Midfa'i Cabinet to divide the army officers into two camps in order to control them more easily; (2) the decline of Midfa'i's prestige resulting from the Shatt al-Arab agreement (see p. 329 below); (3) failure of the Cabinet to supply arms to Palestinians; (4) the arrogant attitude of Sabih Najib; (5) Midfa'i's refusal to give the portfolio of Defence to General Taha instead of Sabih Najib; (6) Midfa'i's failure to meet the army's demand for equipment; and (7) rivalry between the Midfa'i and the Nuri as-Sa'id groups.

<sup>2</sup> 'Umari was then abroad on leave.

been hastily called to Rashid Camp, was told of the grave decision taken by his fellow colleagues. Fawzi tried in vain to have an audience with the King to acquaint him with the army's complaints against the Midfa'i administration, but the Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, unaware of the impending crisis, refused to permit the army to establish contact with the King. Thus was the crisis precipitated.

When preparations for the coup d'état were completed, it was thought prudent to warn Midfa'i in the evening of the impending plot in the hope that action might be avoided by his resigning. The choice of herald fell on Aziz Yamulki who, feeling assured of the ultimate success of the Seven's move, sallied forth to the Prime Minister's house to deliver his message. Finding that the Prime Minister was paying a visit to Senator 'Abd-Allah Safi, Yamulki made his way to Safi's house. Here he did not break the news to the entire audience, but taking the Prime Minister aside, whispered to him that unless he resigned the army would carry out a coup d'état. To his surprise, Midfa'i at once yielded and told Yamulki that he would not allow bloodshed.

Midfa'i immediately hurried back to his house and called a meeting of his Cabinet. He broke the news to his colleagues and, after a brief discussion, it was decided to request the King to relieve Midfa'i of the responsibility of authority. The King called upon the Chief of the General Staff, General Husayn Fawzi, who intimated to him that the army no longer had confidence in Midfa'i, and that they desired to have the new Cabinet entrusted either to General Nuri or to General Taha.<sup>1</sup>

The following morning (25 December), Midfa'i and his colleagues called on the King at the Royal *Diwan*, where they formally tendered their resignations in the presence of the Chief of the General Staff and other leading army officers who had accompanied him. Nuri, who had also been called upon by the King, was invited to form a new Government. Thus by carrying out a third coup d'état the army overthrew three Cabinets within two years.

#### GENERAL NURI'S RETURN TO POWER

General Nuri, who had bitterly complained of the army's interference in politics, was himself elevated to authority by the army.

<sup>1</sup> King Ghazi was reluctant to entrust the Cabinet to General Nuri, but agreed to do so only upon the insistence of the leading army officers (Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, p. 95).

Nuri possibly justified his action on the grounds that he had to resort to the same weapons as his opponents in order to overthrow a Government in which he had served as Foreign Minister in October 1936. He had not been able to form a Government since his resignation in 1932 and had become impatient with Midfa'i's benevolent attitude towards his political opponents. Thus his return to power marked not only the restoration of the pre-Bakr regime but also signified to Nuri's political opponents that trouble might soon befall them.

At the outset, however, Nuri appeared in the guise of a wise statesman who, having looked at the recent past of Iraq with contrition, earnestly determined to embark on a policy which would help to alleviate the hardships and heal the political ills which Iraq had inherited from the immediate past. Except, perhaps, for placing on the retired list the leading army officers who had been Midfa'i's personal supporters (such as Nazif ash-Shawi, Sa'id Tikriti, and others),<sup>1</sup> Nuri proceeded to enlist the co-operation of elements satisfactory to almost all political shades. General Taha al-Hashimi, Yasin's brother and former Chief of the General Staff, was given the portfolio of Defence; Rustum Haydar, former Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, was given Finance; and Naji Shawkat, who had kept out of politics since the resignation of his Government in March 1933, was given Interior. The portfolios of Justice, Economics and Transportation, and Education were given to Mahmud Subhi ad-Daftari, 'Umar Nazmi, and Salih Jabr. Rashid 'Ali, a former Ikha leader and Yasin's right-hand colleague, was appointed (29 January) Chief of the Royal *Diwan*.<sup>2</sup> These as well as several other subsequent appointments in high Government positions were designed to cement the structure of his regime. Moreover Nuri recalled several politicians whom Midfa'i had exiled to several distant districts by invoking the Seditious Propaganda Law, and requested the King to issue a royal decree to release the editor of *al-Istiqlal* from prison. No less important was Nuri's action, immediately following the formation of his Government, in lifting the ban on several political newspapers which Midfa'i had suspended or stopped.

<sup>1</sup> Nuri was perhaps forced to place these army officers on the retired list since they (with Sabih Najib) had toyed with the idea of placing his supporters on the retired list.

<sup>2</sup> Rashid 'Ali told the present writer (5 Apr. 1958) that it was King Ghazi's wish that he should be appointed as Chief of the Royal *Diwan* as the King was very happy with Nuri and sought Rashid's co-operation.

Neither in the short statement made on the day of the installation of his Government nor in the Cabinet's programme (issued on 27 March 1939) should we seek Nuri's ideas on reform. These were given in a speech on 4 January 1939, at the invitation of the Muthanna Club, which was broadcast. In this speech Nuri announced his policy of reform with obvious sincerity and candour. He admitted that, for various reasons, a number of mistakes had been committed in the past, but, he magnanimously contended, responsibility could not rest with any single group; it was due to 'our own immaturity in public life'. He then went on to point out that there were two systems of government in the West, namely the dictatorial and the democratic systems; and expressed his firm belief in the latter. This belief had always been emphasized by the Iraqi nationalists who framed the constitution, and it was subscribed to by Faysal I when he was proclaimed King. Nuri invited the whole nation to co-operate with him in order that 'our constitutional democratic Government' might work effectively. He offered certain practical proposals to achieve that end, such as reviving constructive political parties based on principles consistent with Iraq's national aspirations; recognizing the principle of 'opposition', even if it led to criticism, with a view to its ultimate co-operation with the Government; raising the standard of the press and abolishing restrictions on its freedom in order to enable it to discuss public affairs with enlightenment instead of frittering away its energies in the flattery or abuse of rival politicians; and finally, amending both the constitution and the Electoral Law in such a manner as to make Parliament a truly representative body of the people.

When Nuri began to carry out his proposed scheme of reform he was astounded, and probably discouraged, to find it increasingly difficult to create solidarity among those who professed to be his faithful followers. The burning Palestine problem, which kept him busy during the Midfa'i Cabinet, again distracted his attention from home affairs and he was compelled to leave for England in the middle of January 1939 in order to attend the round-table conference in February. Naji Shawkat was appointed Acting Prime Minister on 12 January, and was entrusted with the difficult task of steering the Cabinet during Nuri's absence. Efforts to organize political parties failed to materialize, in spite of the admitted necessity of reviving them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The insistent clamours of a few individuals and of the press to revive political parties did not avail. See *al-Istiqlal*, 19 Jan. 1939.



When Parliament resumed its session under the new Cabinet on 9 February debate again reverted to vain personal recriminations.<sup>1</sup> Only two sessions of the Chamber of Deputies had taken place when Da'ud as-Sa'di on 20 February initiated discussion with a view to impeaching the members of the Midfa'i Cabinet on the grounds that they had misapplied the Seditious Propaganda Law by arresting Rashid Ali and his followers (including Sa'di himself) and putting them under police supervision.<sup>2</sup> Sa'di's speech to the Chamber of Deputies, which was more in the nature of a popular harangue than a juridical statement, aroused the fury of the former members of the Midfa'i Cabinet and its supporters, who were incited to reply in the most violent manner and to reveal the intrigues and unconstitutional procedure which had swept the new Cabinet into power. Ibrahim Kamal, Minister of Finance under Midfa'i, spoke indignantly and denounced the methods used by Da'ud as-Sa'di and his fellow members in throwing explosive materials in certain public places of the capital in order to achieve power. 'And now that they have attained their objective', continued Kamal, 'we no longer hear about explosive bombs.' Other members and supporters of the former Cabinet also spoke indignantly and when the debate on Sa'di's proposal was ended the opposition members resembled a range of exhausted volcanoes. The vote was finally taken and the proposal was defeated by the entire House; the only vote in its favour was Sa'di's own. While the Government were not in favour of Sa'di's proposal,<sup>3</sup> they realized the strength of the opposition and decided to dissolve Parliament. In the following session of the Chamber of Deputies, on 22 February, a royal decree was unexpectedly read ordering the dissolution of the Chamber and the holding of general elections on the grounds that 'constitutional procedure requires complete harmony between the executive and the legislature', and since in the existing circumstances 'the Cabinet feels that no such harmony exists between itself and the Chamber, it has decided . . . to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies and to hold new elections.' The need for 'harmony' between the executive and the legislature, invariably invoked as a pretext for dissolution, inevitably led to the complete disappearance of any opposition in Parliament.

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 8th Sess., 1938-9, pp. 109-26.

<sup>2</sup> For text of Sa'di's report see *ibid.* pp. 100-9.

<sup>3</sup> Abd al-Wahhab Mahmud, one of Sa'di's friends and a supporter of the Government, tendered his resignation from the Chamber in protest against Sa'di's move, because Sa'di had unnecessarily aroused the opposition in Parliament.

When Nuri returned from England in February,<sup>1</sup> his handling of Iraq's internal affairs appears to have been governed by two considerations: to keep the army out of politics and to crush possible opposition. Since he himself had been helped into power by the army officers, and since his remaining in power was dependent on them, he saw grave obstacles to controlling the army and probably thought it more prudent to handle the army's affairs differently. The vigilant Prime Minister, therefore, occupied himself with other issues and turned to crush some of his political opponents and to awe others, while preparations for the general elections were made.

#### AN ALLEGED PLOT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT

Although General Nuri declared at the outset that he had forgiven the political opponents responsible for the assassination of his brother-in-law, General Ja'far al-Askari, and went so far as to assure Hikmat Sulayman in a private message that he had no ill-feeling towards him, soon after his return from London he began to throw off the mask. In his scheme for revenge he found a great supporter in General Taha al-Hashimi, Minister of Defence, since General Taha himself had suffered the loss of his brother Yasin (Prime Minister of the Government overthrown by the first military coup d'état), who died of a heart attack in exile soon after his fall from power. Nuri also enlisted the support of Amir Abd al-Ilah, cousin of the King. The Amir, who was alleged to have been the plotters' candidate for the throne, eventually became the chief witness against them.

On 6 March it was announced that an impending plot against the State was being prepared, and that its authors were Hikmat Sulayman and his associates of the abortive Hikmat-Bakr regime. 'It became apparent', stated the official announcement, 'that Iraq's success was not regarded with satisfaction by those mischief-makers who initiated harmful activities against the welfare and the true interests of the country. They have been the cause of all the pernicious and unfortunate events which have befallen the country in recent years, threatening the good name of Iraq and the freedom of the people.'<sup>2</sup> A court martial was accordingly set up, under the presidency of Colonel Aziz Yamulki (one of the officers who plotted against the life of Bakr Sidqi),<sup>3</sup> and a decree was issued on 5 March proclaiming martial law in the Rashid Camp and its neighbouring districts. The culprits were immediately arrested and brought to trial.

<sup>1</sup> Tawfiq as-Suwaydi took Nuri's place at the round-table conference in London.

<sup>2</sup> See text in *Iraq Times*, 7 Mar. 1939

<sup>3</sup> See p. 120 above.

The alleged secret plot, which was uncovered by the Iraq Army Intelligence, was supposed to be in the nature of a widespread conspiracy to overthrow the existing regime by planning a huge banquet for over 250 prominent civil and military persons at the house of Amir Abd al-Ilah, with a view to massacring forty or fifty of them, including King Ghazi and Generals Nuri and Taha, and to effecting a coup d'état which would bring the authors of the plot into power, with Amir Abd al-Ilah as a candidate for the throne. Having obtained all the necessary information from Captain Hilmi Abd al-Karim, who was supposed to have been entrusted with the task of acquainting Amir Abd al-Ilah with the purpose of the conspiracy, the Amir informed the Government of the impending plot. While the court martial was conducting its investigations, Nuri found it exceedingly difficult to persuade his colleagues in the Cabinet to inflict capital punishment on Hikmat and his associates; two of them, Naji Shawkat and Mahmud Subhi as-Daftari, stubbornly refusing to agree to condemn Hikmat to death. In the meantime news of Nuri's plot reached the British Embassy in time for it to exercise a salutary influence in deterring him.<sup>1</sup> On 18 March the court martial, on the sole evidence of Amir Abd al-Ilah (who reported the information given to him by Hilmi Abd al-Karim) and the confession of Abd al-Karim himself that he was involved in a plot against the State, passed its verdict in the following statement:

It has been proved by the Military Court Martial at al-Rashid Camp, as a result of investigations carried out some time ago, that the under-named persons have conducted a conspiracy against the safety of the State, and therefore the following sentences have been passed on them:

Hikmat Sulayman, Isma'il Abbawi, Yunis Abbawi, Hilmi Abd al-Karim, and Jawad Husayn: death sentences; Abd al-Hadi Kamil: seven years' hard labour; and Ali Ghalib: eight years' hard labour and two years under police surveillance.

In view of certain reasons that call for clemency, however, the death sentences passed on Isma'il and Yunis Abbawi were commuted to penal servitude for life, the death sentence passed on Jawad Husayn to fifteen years' hard labour, and the death sentence passed on Hikmat Sulayman to five years' imprisonment.

The King, influenced by a moving appeal by Abd al-Karim's wife,

<sup>1</sup> 'After much argument', writes Sir Maurice Peterson, 'I secured from Nuri an undertaking that the sentence [concerning Hikmat] would not be carried out' (Peterson, p. 143).

ordered the only death sentence to be commuted to penal servitude for life.<sup>1</sup>

The cross-examination of the court martial raised a number of problems. All the accused, except perhaps two, denied all the accusations and refuted the evidence with impressive arguments. It was, however, a mystery that Abd al-Karim should repeatedly confess before the court that such a conspiracy was planned in co-operation with the other accused persons.<sup>2</sup> To the problem of what prompted Abd al-Karim to admit, or fabricate, such a fantastic conspiracy I have not yet found a satisfactory answer.<sup>3</sup>

The nature of the court martial's verdict raised serious doubt among the people, and the writer's investigations have confirmed the opinion of impartial observers that Generals Nuri and Taha resorted to vindictive measures in order to punish Hikmat Sulayman and his associates. In his speech on 29 April 1939 Prime Minister Nuri as-Sa'id denounced the authors of the plot as former members of the Union and Progress Party of the Ottoman Empire, who, having wrought havoc with the integrity of that Empire, had turned to destroy the new kingdom of Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

Both Nuri as-Sa'id and Hikmat Sulayman had begun their public life in Turkey. From the time when the Arab nationalist movement turned against the Turkish Unionists, when the latter came into power and embarked on their policy of Turkification, Hikmat (younger brother of Mahmud Shevket Pasha, who led the military coup d'état against Sultan Abd al-Hamid II) supported the policy of the Unionists, while Nuri, then an army officer engaged in secret activities of Arab societies, supported the Arab nationalist claims against the Unionists' policy. Evidently Hikmat had again assumed the role of the supporter of military rule in Iraq when he invited the army to lead a rebellion against the Government, of which Nuri, it will be recalled,

<sup>1</sup> In view of Hikmat's illness within three months from his imprisonment, he was set free and resided in Sulaymaniya; his associates were all released from prison in April 1941, when Rashid Ali assumed power.

<sup>2</sup> In an interview with the present writer Colonel Aziz Yamulki, president of the court martial, stated that in a vague statement Abd al-Hadi Kamil supported Hilmi Abd al-Karim's evidence; but Yamulki himself was not convinced by the evidence produced.

<sup>3</sup> C. J. Edmonds made the following comment: 'The mystery of the confession is that Hilmi Abd al-Karim was a half-wit; he was bamboozled by the Chief of the Iraq Army Intelligence into believing there was a plot, and joining it.' Cf. Sabbagh, who regarded Hilmi as a spy (*Memoirs*, pp. 78-79).

<sup>4</sup> For text of the speech see *al-Bilad*, 30 Apr. 1939.



was a member. When Hikmat was overthrown and Nuri came back to power, it seems quite credible that a long-accumulated vindictive spirit at last prompted Nuri not only to punish his old foe and rival but also to get rid of him and his associates once and for all.

KING GHAZI'S DEATH:  
PROCLAMATION OF THE REGENCY

While General Nuri was struggling with overwhelming difficulties, another incident occurred which had far-reaching effects on the internal politics of the country. This was the sudden and unexpected death of King Ghazi in a motor accident.

The story of this tragic event may be briefly told, as stated in the official communiqué, as follows: While Ghazi, together with his personal servant and supervisor of radio, were driving in the same car from the Zuhur Palace on their way to the Harithiya Palace, on the evening of 4 April 1939, an accident suddenly occurred. The two men were sitting in the back seats of the car while the King was driving at an excessive speed.

When the car had passed over the railway level-crossing between the two Palaces [stated the communiqué] the vehicle got out of control owing to its high speed; it shot off the road on to rough ground, crashing into an electric standard before His Majesty could stop it. The crash broke the standard, which fell on His Majesty's head, fracturing the skull and causing severe laceration of the brain. His Majesty was taken by police officers to Harithiya Palace, where he died an hour later.

Investigations were at once made by the police. 'After examining carefully all aspects of the accident', stated the Report of the Baghdad West investigating magistrate, 'it has been proved that the crash was purely accidental.' The case was therefore closed, 'as there was no suspicion of a criminal act'.<sup>1</sup>

On 5 April, early in the morning soon after the accident, the Council of Ministers met at the Zuhur Palace and passed the following resolutions: (1) To proclaim His Royal Highness Amir Faysal as His Majesty King Faysal II, in accordance with Article 20 of the constitution;<sup>2</sup> (2) to proclaim His Royal Highness Amir Abd al-Ilah

<sup>1</sup> See text of the 'Report of the Baghdad West Investigating Magistrate', *Iraq Times*, 6 Apr. 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 20 states: 'The heir apparent shall be the eldest son of the King, in direct line, in accordance with the provision of the law of succession' (text of the article before the Second Amendment of 1942).

Regent, in view of the fact that His Majesty the King had not come of age, in accordance with King Ghazi's wish as stated by Her Majesty the Queen and Princess Rajiha, King Ghazi's sister, before the Council of Ministers; (3) to convene Parliament, in order to approve the proclamation of Regency in accordance with Article 22 of the constitution.

The candidacy of Amir Abd al-Ilah to the Regency was the subject of controversy among leading politicians. Some of them supported the candidacy of Amir Zayd, uncle of the new King and brother of Faysal I; but Nuri and the leading army officers, with whom Amir Abd al-Ilah had recently developed friendly relations, insisted on the candidacy of the latter. Thus before the candidacy of Amir Abd al-Ilah was announced to the public and presented to Parliament for approval, it had been agreed upon among the politicians and the army.<sup>1</sup>

Early on the morning of 5 April the Government announced the news of the death of the King in an official statement, and huge crowds immediately gathered on both sides of the capital's main street and along the A'damiya road to the royal mausoleum, to witness the funeral procession. The King's body had already been moved early in the morning to the Royal *Diwan*, and an assembly representing the various classes of the people gathered to pay their last tribute to the young King.

The death of King Ghazi was felt to be a national calamity, since he was regarded as a popular hero by the Arab nationalists and the rank and file of the people. He had violently denounced French rule over Syria and Zionist claims in Palestine, and he demanded in no uncertain terms, in defiance of British prestige and influence, the annexation of Kuwayt.<sup>2</sup> His personal relations with certain influential army officers were intimate, and his outspoken political pronouncements gave great satisfaction both to the army and to the nationalists. His sudden death therefore took the country by surprise and gave

<sup>1</sup> See Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>2</sup> 'King Ghazi's total irresponsibility', writes Sir Maurice Peterson, 'became accentuated under the new regime. In particular his private broadcasting station in the Palace, which had long been a source of anxiety, became more and more mischievous in tone, especially towards the Sheikh of Koweit, Iraq's next-door neighbour at the head of the Persian Gulf and a ruler who stood in close relation to the British Government. The line taken by the broadcast was that the Sheikh was an out-of-date feudal despot whose backward rule contrasted with the enlightened régime existing in Iraq. Koweit, it was implied, would be much better off merged with her northern neighbour' (Peterson, p. 150).

rise to speculations as to possible foreign or internal political intrigues.<sup>1</sup>

On 6 April Parliament was convened, after its dissolution the preceding December, and both the Prime Minister and the President of the Senate paid tribute to King Ghazi. The joint session of Parliament, after a ten-minute silence, was addressed by the President of the Senate, who read the resolutions passed by the Council of Ministers on 4 April. The proclamation of the Regency, the President of the Senate declared, required the approval of Parliament and therefore each member was called by name to give his decision. All those present unanimously approved the proclamation (only eight deputies were absent). Amir Abd al-Ilah was then called upon to take the oath as Regent in the following terms: 'I swear by Almighty God to respect the country's constitution and to be faithful to the nation and the country.' Immediately afterwards the meeting came to an end.

King Ghazi's sudden death was a mystery to the great majority of the people, especially in the absence of a clear official announcement immediately afterwards. Started by anti-British elements, rumours that the accident was due to a secret British plot spread like wildfire throughout the country. This caused such a commotion among the students and the rank and file in Mosul that they were prompted to avenge the King's death by assaulting the British Consul at Mosul. Early on the morning of 5 April the excited crowd went to the British Consulate. The Consul, G. E. A. C. Monck-Mason, who appeared on the balcony to placate the crowd by telling them the facts, was dealt a fatal blow with a pick-axe from behind.

Nuri at once took up the matter, expressed regret to the British Embassy in Baghdad, and promised full investigation as well as payment of compensation to the family of the murdered Consul. The affair was closed by the declaration of martial law in Mosul and the punishment of a few of the responsible leaders of the crowd, but the incident reflected political unrest in the country and dissatisfaction with the policy of the Government.

#### GENERAL NURI'S FIRST CABINET UNDER THE REGENCY

In accordance with constitutional practice, Nuri tendered his letter of resignation to the Regent on 6 April in order to give him the

<sup>1</sup> For speculations as to the possibility of the assassination of King Ghazi, see Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, pp. 80-97.

opportunity of making his choice for the premiership. On the same day Amir Abd al-Ilah invited Nuri to form the new Government, affirming confidence in the man who had supported his candidacy for the Regency. Nuri made no immediate change in the composition of his Government, but when a month later Naji Shawkat, Minister of the Interior, resigned, he sought to strengthen his Government by giving the portfolio of Foreign Affairs to Ali Jawdat. Shawkat resigned in protest against Nuri's transfer of the Mutasarrif of Baghdad, who had relaxed restrictions on Hikmat Sulayman (now a prisoner) during Shawkat's absence in Turkey. Nuri enlarged his Cabinet in August by dividing the portfolio of Economics and Transportation into two, appointing in September Jalal Baban as Minister of Transportation and Public Works, and Sadiq al-Bassam, one of Nuri's followers, as Minister of Economics. Umar Nazmi was transferred to Interior in place of Shawkat. Further, Nuri created a new portfolio for Social Affairs, to which he invited Sami Shawkat, brother of Naji Shawkat, who had long supported Nuri in opposition to his brother's policies.

Parliament, as has been stated, was dissolved in February, and preparations were made for holding new elections. In March the programme of the Government was announced, promising the amendment of the constitution, the strengthening of the army, and a foreign policy consistent with Iraq's national aspirations.<sup>1</sup> The elections were completed early in June, and the new Parliament met on 11 June. Owing to overwhelming internal difficulties, and, perhaps, to the deterioration in the international situation, the elections were as rigidly controlled as former elections; the Government nominees were therefore all returned as members of the new Chamber of Deputies. With the possible exception of a few opposing members who were excluded, the new members were drawn mainly from members of the four former sessions of Parliament.<sup>2</sup> This Chamber, which proved to be a subservient tool in the hands of various opposing Cabinets, was the first to complete its four-years' session.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See text of the programme in *al-Bilad*, 28 Mar. 1939.

<sup>2</sup> See a statement to this effect by the Prime Minister in *al-Istiqlal*, 12 June 1939.

<sup>3</sup> Sayyid Abd al-Mahdi, speaking in the second sitting of the Chamber of Deputies on 17 June 1939, criticized the way in which the elections were carried out and remarked that such a control had left Parliament devoid of any dignity. See *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 9th (Extraord.) Sess., 1939, p. 12.



## THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR

While Nuri showed remarkable ability in handling Iraq's internal problems the deterioration in the international situation greatly affected the policy of his Cabinet. Iraq had been subjected to ideological propaganda for a long time, and the familiar subject of the role of the Arabs should the war break out was discussed by various groups. From the Munich Agreement to the declaration of war, opinion was divided as to the attitude of the Arabs should the Middle East be drawn into the war. Axis propaganda, augmented by nationalist frustration in Syria and Palestine, had influenced a great number of the people who looked forward to a better future for the Arabs if Great Britain and France lost the war; but the leading Iraqi nationalists were apprehensive as to the fate of the Arabs if the Axis Powers penetrated to the Middle East. The reasons which created this divided loyalty will be discussed later;<sup>1</sup> but the clash between the two did not actually become serious until the fall of France in June 1940. Nuri's policy, therefore, by adhering to the alliance with Great Britain, while it aroused the criticism of the pan-Arabs, was on the whole regarded as sound. On 30 March 1939 Nuri declared: 'Our foreign policy is based on the following two principles: (1) The policy of alliance with neighbouring independent Arab States, and sincere friendship with our two neighbours, Turkey and Persia, in the spirit of the Sa'dabad Pact; (2) the policy of our alliance with Great Britain. . . .'

When, however, the European crisis culminated in Germany's attack on Poland on 1 September, the subject of Iraq's obligations under the Treaty of Alliance with Britain should the German-Polish conflict develop into a general war was discussed by Nuri and the leading politicians (including the leading army officers). Nuri and a few of his followers were prepared to carry out in full Iraq's obligations under the treaty and went so far as to advocate the declaration of war on the side of Britain; the pan-Arab group (including Rashid Ali, the Mufti, and the leading army officers) wanted to extract concessions on Palestine and Syria in lieu of Iraq's fulfilment of her treaty obligations; the majority, however, advised caution and saw no reason to declare war on the side of Britain.<sup>2</sup> Thereupon Nuri, on

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 168 ff. below.

<sup>2</sup> C. J. Edmonds, commenting on this paragraph, added the following statement: 'My recollection is that the issue before the Regent and the politicians just before and after the outbreak of the war was whether Iraq should declare war on

the evening of 1 September made a speech, which was broadcast, in which he defined the attitude of Iraq should the German-Polish conflict develop into a general war. After expressing his deep regret that the international situation had deteriorated to such an extent, Nuri said that Iraq, as a small nation, could do nothing. He therefore thought it his duty to explain to the public the position of his Government.

This country [said General Nuri] is bound to Great Britain by the Treaty of Alliance, which was signed on 30 June 1930. Article 4 of this treaty provides that 'should . . . either of the High Contracting Parties become engaged in war, the other High Contracting Party will . . . immediately come to his aid in the capacity of an ally. In the event of an imminent menace of war the High Contracting Parties will immediately concert together the necessary measures of defence. The aid of His Majesty the King of Iraq in the event of war or the imminent menace of war will consist in furnishing to His Britannic Majesty on Iraq territory all facilities and assistance in his power, including the use of railways, rivers, ports, aerodromes, and means of communication.'

It will be seen from the foregoing articles that Iraq, in her capacity as an ally of Great Britain, is bound only to afford all facilities in the form of transportation and communications to Great Britain inside Iraq and is not bound to take part in war on any front. But if Iraq is attacked—which is improbable—then she will be bound to defend her frontiers.<sup>1</sup>

On 3 September Great Britain declared war on Germany. The Iraqi Government issued a decree announcing that 'the international situation has become critical', and therefore the Minister of Interior<sup>2</sup> was empowered to censor all news or other information that was

Germany or just declare a state of war; but some of the politicians (Rashid Ali from his post of vantage as Chief of the Royal Diwan in particular) already thought of using the issue in order to extract concessions on Palestine and Syria, while the younger officers feared that war might mean being sent to the front (hence Nuri's broadcast of 1 September). While the Government was hesitating, Egypt broke off relations with Germany and Iraq followed suit on 5 Sept. In an interview with the present writer Rashid Ali confirmed the view that he had opposed the declaration of war against Germany—since this was not required under the Treaty of Alliance—and stated that he had been approached by General Husayn Fawzi, then Chief of the General Staff, who urged him to oppose a declaration of war against Germany.

<sup>1</sup> On 21 Sept. General Taha al-Hashimi, Minister of Defence, broadcast a speech in which he endorsed Nuri's speech. On 25 Sept. Nuri broadcast another speech in which he reiterated the Iraqi Government's position as stated in his previous speech. For texts of these speeches see *Iraq Times*, 22 and 26 Sept. 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Since the resignation of Naji Shawkat on 28 Apr. 1939 Nuri himself assumed the portfolio of Interior in addition to the premiership till 20 Sept. (when 'Umar Nazmi was transferred from Transportation and Public Works to Interior).

received for publication, especially that which had a bearing on the foreign policy of Iraq.

On 5 September the Iraqi Government broke off diplomatic relations with Germany. The official communiqué stated: 'The Council of Ministers, at its meeting on 5 September 1939, decided to sever relations between the Iraqi Government and the German Government, and to deport all German subjects at present residing in Iraq.' On the following day the German Minister, Dr Fritz Grobba, was given his passport and left Iraq, with the members of his staff. Moreover all German subjects in Iraq were at first interned and then, when handed over to the British authorities, were deported to India.

On 9 September it was announced in London that the Regent, Amir Abd al-Ilah, had sent the following message to King George VI:

In the present grave international situation the duties of friendship and the honourable discharge of our obligations make it incumbent on me to express to Your Majesty the unshakable attachment of our Government and people alike to the letter and spirit of the Treaty of Alliance uniting Iraq and Britain, and to assure you of our firm determination to do everything in our power in the same spirit, to co-operate with our great ally until right and justice and the lofty principles, to defend which you have entered the war, shall prevail.

King George replied stating that his Government much appreciated the encouragement the message brought them; if ever the horrors of war were to descend upon Iraq his Government would carry out their obligations in the same spirit of loyalty and resolution.

Nuri's action in breaking off diplomatic relations with Germany aroused criticism in nationalist circles who had hoped that German victory would free Palestine and Syria from British and French control. His action in handing over the German subjects in Iraq to the British authorities was particularly criticized by both moderate and extremists as an unnecessary measure of unfriendliness towards Germany.<sup>1</sup> When Parliament was convened on 1 November, criticism was made of some aspects of Nuri's policy. In his Speech from the Throne the Regent reviewed the policy of the Government and referred to the aggression of Germany and her violation of various international obligations, which compelled Great Britain, in defence of the independence of other States, to declare war. He also referred

<sup>1</sup> See the Memoirs of the Mufti's Secretary 'Uthman Kamal Haddad, *Harakat Rashid 'Ali al-Gaylani* (Sidon, 1950; later referred to as Haddad, *Memoirs*), pp. 13-14.

to the decision of the Iraqi Government to sever diplomatic relations with Germany, and its reaffirmation to fulfil Iraq's treaty obligations towards Britain. The speech was criticized in both Houses of Parliament on the grounds that the Government, before making those decisions, should have summoned Parliament to an extraordinary session, in order to discuss the measures necessary for the defence of the country and the regulation of its economic life. Senator Jamil al-Midfa'i criticized Nuri's action in handing over German citizens in Iraq to the British authorities on grounds of impropriety; he maintained that the Iraqi Government should have kept the interned Germans under its own supervision.<sup>1</sup> With regard to Iraq's treaty obligations towards Great Britain, the prevailing opinion in Parliament was favourable to their fulfilment; but a few members, in both Houses, requested the Government to ask Britain to fulfil the national aspirations of the other Arab countries, especially those of the Arabs of Palestine.<sup>2</sup>

The Government of Iraq, while it declared its non-belligerency, began to take precautionary measures which were intended to protect the country from foreign propaganda or, in case it was attacked, to prepare it for such an eventuality as actual participation in war. On 12 September two important decrees were issued; the first proclaimed a 'state of emergency' which empowered the Minister of Interior, in addition to the powers vested in him under the Residence Law, to fix the place of residence of any foreigner in Iraq and the conditions under which he would be permitted to stay in the country as well as to supervise his movements. The Minister was also empowered to issue orders for the arrest of any foreigner if he had reasons to believe that it was dangerous to allow him to remain at liberty; to order general or partial black-out in any area of the country; and to prohibit the use of wireless receiving sets in public places and impose a curfew in any place or district of Iraq.

The other decree, entitled 'Decree for Organizing the Country's Economic Life during the present International Crisis', gave the Government powers to issue regulations for the control, prevention, or restriction of the import or export of certain goods, including goods which were in possession of the Customs authorities. The Government was also empowered to take steps for the storage,

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Senate*, 9th Sess., 1939, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 1939, pp. 43-44, 47-50; *Proc. Senate*, 1939, pp. 7-8.



supply, and sale of 'essential commodities'; to monopolize their sale to the public; and to fix prices and take steps to ensure the effective execution of measures decided upon. On 13 September a decree was issued which provided for the establishment of a Central Supply Board to be appointed by the Council of Ministers. The Board, with a Cabinet Minister as its chairman, was authorized to set up similar supply boards in various districts, and it was entrusted with the duty of seeing that the measures for regulating the economic life of the country were effectively carried out.

With regard to defence, a decree was issued on 13 September which empowered the Minister of Defence, in the event of a threat of war or declaration of war, or on the proclamation of general mobilization, to requisition all factories, all means of land, sea, and air transport, bridges, roads, ports, railways, stores of petrol, oil, fuel, medical supplies, and wireless receiving sets. The Minister was also empowered to supervise all publications, letters, telegrams, and wireless and telephonic communications.

#### ASSASSINATION OF THE MINISTER OF FINANCE

The political opponents of General Nuri contended that the strength of his Cabinet was mainly due to Rustum Haydar, Minister of Finance, who had already distinguished himself in the service of King Faysal I in Syria and Iraq and had been a close friend of Nuri. In 1931 Haydar had joined Nuri's first Cabinet as Minister of Finance, and was a great source of strength to that Cabinet. When Nuri returned to power in 1938, Haydar, as one of the *émigrés* who had suffered persecution under the Hikmat-Bakr regime, was naturally invited by Nuri to join his Cabinet and was given the portfolio of Finance. Thus Haydar had reached Cabinet rank by sheer ability and hard work. It is for this very reason that Nuri's political opponents concentrated their attack on the Cabinet by criticizing its financial policy, while Ibrahim Kamal and Sabih Najib, both of the Midfa'i group, indulged in a scathing and personal attack on Haydar. While the Prime Minister's suspicion of Haydar's opponents was naturally aroused when Haydar was murdered, his handling of the affair aroused criticism and was one of the causes of his Cabinet's eventual fall.

Rustum Haydar, it is true, was praised for his intelligence and integrity, but his Syrian origin<sup>1</sup> and the fact that he was a Shi'i told

<sup>1</sup> He was born at Ba'labakk (Baalbek), now in Lebanon; this town, however, was in Syria before the First World War.

against him. He was mistrusted by Sunni and anti-Syrian elements for championing the cause of the Shi'i community. Haydar was also much criticized by many Arab nationalists for his support of Nuri's policies, in particular his pro-British policy, since they thought the salvation of the Arabs depended on the destruction of the democratic bloc.

Husayn Fawzi Tawfiq, the murderer, was an adventurer who had gone from one failure to another. He displayed, from his early life, an egocentric and narrow turn of mind, and an aversion to the Syrians in Iraq, whom he regarded as lacking in genuine patriotism. He was employed by the Department of Police but was later dismissed in 1935. He was then employed in the Ministry of Defence but soon, again, was dismissed. Having thus lost his opportunity in Government service, Tawfiq began to work as an agent for local merchants and made a tour in Europe and visited Germany. When he returned to Iraq he became violently anti-British and pro-Axis. But, it seems, his financial resources were hardly enough to provide him with a decent living and he applied once more for Government service. When his inquiries were not followed by any definite promises, he was, by way of excuse, told that the Minister of Finance was not in favour of his re-employment. Tawfiq finally decided to see the Minister of Finance with the intention of taking his life should that Minister refuse his appeal. On 18 January 1940 Tawfiq went to see Rustum Haydar in his own office and handed a threatening letter to him. Sensing that an attempt would be made on his life, Haydar at once decided to leave the office, but Tawfiq instantly fired at him. Haydar was immediately taken to the Royal Hospital, but died from his wounds four days later. Tawfiq wrote a personal letter to the Prime Minister from prison, asking for pardon, and stated that he had been actuated to commit the crime purely from 'nationalist motives'.

Owing to the murderer's background, and to the possible complicity of Haydar's political opponents (the Midfa'i group), the Prime Minister decided to carry out an extensive investigation. The case was referred to a court martial, and martial law was declared at the Rashid Camp. The court opened the case on 3 March 1940, and six accused, including the murderer, were brought to trial. In the course of his trial Tawfiq declared that 'he attended a luncheon party some months ago at the estate of Sabih Najib' (former Minister of Defence under Midfa'i). 'After lunch', said Tawfiq, 'Sabih Najib and Ibrahim Kamal drew him apart from the other guests and induced him to save the country from Rustum Haydar.'

The court martial examined the statements of the defendants and came to the conclusion that the principal defendant had committed the crime on his own initiative. He was accordingly sentenced to death (and was subsequently hanged on 27 March). As to the other defendants, who were accused of 'inducing the murderer to commit the crime', the court, having cross-examined all witnesses, came to the conclusion that there was no proof, and they were all acquitted except Sabih Najib. The court found that in spite of the fact that there was no evidence to suggest that Najib had incited Tawfiq to commit the murder, he had nevertheless uttered words 'liable to cause feeling of hatred and dissension among various sections of the community', at a party given by Hamdi al-Pachachi. The court therefore sentenced him to one year's imprisonment.<sup>1</sup>

Tawfiq's attempt to implicate six other persons by his express declaration to the court gave rise to a great deal of unfavourable comment. The opposition contended that the Prime Minister had tried, in the same way as in the alleged conspiracy attributed to Hikmat Sulayman, to get rid of his political opponents by involving them in the affair. It was remarked likewise that the several private conversations which the Prime Minister had with Tawfiq before the trial were designed, perhaps, to influence him to implicate Ibrahim Kamal, Sabih Najib, and other political opponents in the matter. It was assumed that Tawfiq was probably promised pardon by the Prime Minister if he implicated the foregoing persons in the assassination. This assumption, it is held, was supported by the fact that Tawfiq was reported to have uttered, shortly before he was hanged, a few words to the effect that the Prime Minister had betrayed him; which seemed evidence of the Prime Minister's complicity in implicating his political opponents.

In an interview with the writer Salih Jabr, a great friend of Rustum Haydar and one who owed his elevation to Cabinet rank to him, asserted that he had firmly believed that the assassination of Haydar was due to pro-Axis instigators who feared Haydar's influence in promoting Anglo-Iraqi co-operation. While it is true that the pan-Arab circle of Haj Amin al-Husayni, Mufti of Jerusalem, was far from favourable to Haydar's association with Nuri's policies,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting from the viewpoint of legal procedure to note that Sabih Najib was sentenced for a crime other than that for which he was being tried. Najib was released on 25 Apr. after serving hardly a month in prison. Rashid Ali, who succeeded Nuri as Premier, secured a royal pardon for him.

<sup>2</sup> See Haddad, *Memoirs*, pp. 19-20.

Haydar's broader views on pan-Arabism, which were not unknown to the pan-Arabs in Iraq, were essentially in agreement with them. The *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, which contain some valuable material on Iraq, are not very helpful on this matter. Grobba thought that the murder was wrapped in mystery. Haydar, he reported to the German Foreign Office, was a great friend of Germany and an admirer of Hitler; he therefore suggested that Haydar's murder was possibly instigated by the British.<sup>1</sup> Grobba maintained close contact with Haydar and felt that he had decided sympathy for Germany and for Hitler's ideas of National-Socialism. Haydar intimated to Grobba that the Arab countries, in order to achieve unity, needed the same kind of leadership which Hitler had offered to Germany. In August 1938, Grobba reported, Haydar visited him in Beirut and offered to translate Hitler's speeches into Arabic for the purpose of acquainting the Arabs with the principle of 'leadership' and with the ideas of National-Socialism. Shortly before the outbreak of the war Haydar told Grobba that Iraq and the other Arab countries would like to side with Germany; but, Haydar added, they could not do so then. Iraq would have to side with Great Britain, who possessed means to render her powerless, while Germany could not possibly help the Arabs because she lacked direct connexions. Haydar, Grobba held, had differences with Nuri regarding Iraq's attitude toward Germany. Nuri wanted to declare war on Germany while Haydar advocated neutrality: it was Rustum Haydar, General Taha al-Hashimi, and Mahmud Subhi ad-Daftari, the leading ministers in Nuri's Cabinet, who opposed Nuri's proposal to declare war on Germany. However, Grobba added, it was wrong to conclude that Haydar, in spite of his friendliness to Germany, was not friendly to the British.<sup>2</sup>

Owing to the conflicting viewpoints held as to possible ideological motives for the murder of Haydar, it seems unlikely that they did in fact directly contribute to his murder since he had not expressed extreme viewpoints on foreign policy. It is likely that Haydar expressed an aspiration for the ultimate establishment of an Arab Union

<sup>1</sup> Grobba's suggestion was not taken seriously by the German Foreign Office since Haydar was regarded as an upholder of pro-British policy.

<sup>2</sup> In an interview with Grobba in Bonn on 7 July 1958 the present writer sought further explanation as to why Haydar supported Nuri's policy towards Britain if Haydar was as friendly to the German Foreign Office as Grobba reported. Grobba still thought that Haydar was a great friend to Germany and to him personally, but he thought that he might have changed his attitude after Britain declared war on Germany.



based on the principles of National-Socialism, but in practice he seemed to have been convinced, like Nuri, that Iraq's future was dependent on British friendship. Haydar's assassination, therefore, must be construed, in the writer's opinion, as the culmination of factional jealousies; its immediate cause, however, was by no means clear. The mind of the murderer may have been influenced by certain ideals, but apparently the main reasons which prompted him to commit the crime were personal.

#### THE FOURTH COUP D'ÉTAT

From the time when the war broke out Nuri began to pay more attention to foreign affairs, in which he was keenly interested, and to formulate a policy for Iraq which would define more precisely her attitude towards Great Britain and the Axis Powers. He was able, it is true, to persuade the leading politicians to break off diplomatic relations with Germany, but found an increasing opposition to affording Britain further support under the treaty. Nuri had proposed not only declaring war on Germany but also taking an active part in it (by sending two divisions either to the Libyan front, or to participate in the contemplated invasion of the Balkans); but these suggestions were criticized on the grounds that neither Iraq nor the other Arab countries (Syria and Palestine) would gain from the participation in a war on the side of the Powers who themselves have denied the Arabs freedom and independence. Iraq's participation in the war on the side of Britain, Nuri's pan-Arab opponents argued, would injure the larger Arab interests by antagonizing their potential friends—the Axis Powers.

On 13 February 1940 Nuri formally submitted his proposals of declaring war on Germany and sending two divisions either to Libya or the Balkans to the High Defence Council, presided over by the Minister of Defence, General Taha al-Hashimi. Nuri was opposed by General Husayn Fawzi, Chief of the General Staff, who thought that the Iraqi army should intervene at the opportune moment to liberate the other Arab countries, not to dissipate its energies in far-flung fronts.<sup>1</sup> Nuri dropped his proposals for the moment since the leading army officers were opposed to them.

<sup>1</sup> General Husayn Fawzi, in one of his statements opposing Nuri's proposal, said: 'Supposing the two Iraqi divisions would be sent to the Balkans, and that on their way through Aleppo an Arab would stop one of the Iraqi soldiers inquiring: 'O brother, where are you going?' 'To the Balkans, to fight Germany', he will answer. 'Allah, Allah,' the Arab will protest, 'what about Syria and Palestine, O brother?' See Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, pp. 115, 122.

Nuri, it will be recalled, had already lost in Rustum Haydar a wise counsellor and one of his principal supporters. After the assassination of Haydar his Cabinet grew weaker because it lacked solidarity. From the time that he initiated the trial of Hikmat Sulayman disagreement among Nuri's colleagues grew and culminated in the murder of Haydar. Nuri's alleged attempt to silence his political opponents fostered this, and some, such as Salih Jabr, Haydar's protégé, protested that a thorough investigation had not been made.<sup>1</sup> Thereupon Nuri began to toy with the idea of replacing his Cabinet by another, headed by Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, then Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, in which he and General Taha would serve as Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence. In such an arrangement he would not only gain the support of Rashid Ali, replacing Haydar in the triumvirate, but would also be able to renew his attempt to bring Iraq into the war in the name of Rashid Ali. Nuri intimated to his close associates in the army that he and Taha had agreed that he should be succeeded by Rashid Ali since his Cabinet had become weak after Haydar's assassination. Although some of the army officers protested (in particular Colonel Fahmi Sa'id), Nuri assured them he and General Taha would be willing to serve under Rashid Ali as Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Defence.<sup>2</sup>

Having agreed on this plan, Nuri tendered his resignation to the Regent on 18 February in a letter in which he stated certain difficulties which had compelled him to resign. Nuri's real difficulties were hardly touched on in this letter; he merely reviewed the political situation in Iraq since the first coup d'état, which, he said, had 'enabled a number of adventurers to assume power' (referring to Hikmat Sulayman and his supporters) through unlawful means, who had exposed the integrity of Iraq to the greatest dangers.

<sup>1</sup> In an interview with the writer Nuri stated that the main reason for the fall of his Cabinet was the lack of solidarity which followed Haydar's assassination. Haydar, said Nuri, was a congenial and affable person who was always capable of mending differences among the members of the Cabinet. His assassination had not only meant the loss of such an integrating element, but had also aggravated the schism in the Cabinet.

<sup>2</sup> Nuri discussed the change of Government with six of his close supporters in the army (Colonel Salah ad-Din as-Sabbagh, Fahmi Sa'id, Mahmud Salman, Kamil Shabib, Isma'il Namiq, and Sa'id Yahya al-Khayyat) at secret meetings in his house on 14 and 16 Feb. 1940. There was no agreement at the first meeting owing to the opposition of Sa'id, but at the second, to which General Taha was invited, the army officers reluctantly approved. See Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, pp. 122-4.

When Iraq was saved from the nightmare of this rule [continued General Nuri] some persons in influential positions recommended the adoption of a policy of 'forgetting the past' in the belief that it would help to restore the unity of the country and make for co-operation and progress. It was not long before the dangers arising from this policy became evident, and a plot for another coup d'état was discovered. This, like the first plot, was intended to place its instigators in positions of power.

Nuri went on to declare that he had maintained a policy of 'forgetting the past', with the obvious consequences that it led to further political crimes culminating in the murder of the Minister of Finance. 'These acts of violence', he said in denouncing his political opponents, 'had a decisive effect on public opinion. The country is now united in its conviction that a continuation of such crimes would expose Iraq to the gravest dangers.' But, Nuri added, circumstances had made it absolutely impossible 'to carry out the duties incumbent on me in a manner which will reassure the public'.

When Nuri formally resigned on 18 February, General Husayn Fawzi, Chief of General Staff, called a meeting of eight of the leading army officers at his house and announced that Nuri had resigned and that Rashid Ali was invited to form a new Government.<sup>1</sup> The point at issue, he declared, was not whether Rashid Ali should not form a Government (since he and General Amin al-'Umari were in favour of this), but whether Rashid Ali should not have full freedom in choosing the members of his Cabinet by advising the Regent against the participation of Generals Nuri and Taha in the new Government. The army officers were divided on this issue: three (Generals Husayn Fawzi and 'Umari, and Colonel Yamulki) argued against the participation of Nuri and Taha, but the others supported their participation. To resolve the issue (although several of them knew what the composition of the new Government would be) it was agreed to assume a 'neutral attitude' in the formation of the new Government, giving the new Premier freedom to choose his colleagues.

Hardly had the Three discovered that the composition of the new Cabinet was already agreed upon, including the participation of Generals Nuri and Taha, than the Chief of the General Staff informed the Regent that his colleagues demanded the exclusion of Nuri and Taha from the new Government and hinted that the army would be

<sup>1</sup> The eight army officers were the following: Husayn Fawzi, Amin al-'Umari, Aziz Yamulki, Salah ad-Din as-Sabbagh, Fahmi Sa'id, Mahmud Salman, Kamil Shabib, and Isma'il Namiq.

alerted.<sup>1</sup> The Regent, on learning that the majority of the leading army officers were on the side of Generals Nuri and Taha, rejected the proposal of the Chief of the General Staff. At this juncture Rashid Ali, who was expected to form a new Government, declined to do so, since he suspected that it would lead to military strife.

On 21 February the Three, supported by a few army officers, concentrated their forces at Washshash Camp and placed them on the alert. On hearing of this move the opposing colonels placed their forces in the Rashid Camp on the alert. It looked as if the two factions in the army would start fighting, and civil war was likely to follow. The Regent, having been assured that the forces outside the capital (in Mosul, Kirkuk, and Diwaniya) were on his side, invited General Nuri to reconstitute his Cabinet and put an end to the impending strife between the two factions. Nuri formed his Cabinet on the same day (21 February) and at once issued orders placing the Three on the retired list.<sup>2</sup> Nuri's supporters in the army were thus successful not only in reinstalling their candidates in positions of power but also in becoming the unrivalled masters of the army. The evil consequence of this move was probably not foreseen by Nuri. But a year later he himself became the victim of another rebellion raised by 'Four' of the leading army officers (Colonels Salah ad-Din as-Sabbagh, Fahmi Sa'id, Mahmud Salman, and Kamil Shabib) in support of the very Premier whom their opponents—the Three—sought to give freedom to form a Cabinet without the inclusion of Nuri and Taha.<sup>3</sup>

#### GENERAL NURI'S RECONSTRUCTED CABINET

On the following day, 22 February, Nuri chose his colleagues. With only minor changes the personnel was the same as that of his former

<sup>1</sup> General Husayn Fawzi, in a letter to the editor of *al-Muwatin*, commenting on the events concerning this abortive military coup, stated that it was perhaps 'Umari who urged the use of the army against his opponents, but that it was never his intention to do so when he advised the Regent against the participation of Nuri and Taha in the Rashid Ali Cabinet. See Mahmud ad-Durra, 'Wara' al-Bawwaba as-Sawda', *al-Muwatin*, 1 Mar. 1952, pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> The Three suggested that the other four colonels should also be placed on the retired list since they were just as guilty in initiating this quarrel among the army officers (see the memoirs of Mahmud ad-Durra, 'Wara' al-Bawwaba as-Sawda', *al-Muwatin*, 23 Feb. 1952, pp. 7-8); but it was obvious that Nuri and Taha, themselves on the side of the Four Colonels, rejected the suggestion.

<sup>3</sup> Nuri, realizing the unjust action taken against the Three, offered them diplomatic posts abroad. Husayn Fawzi and 'Umari refused, but Yamulki accepted the position of chargé d'affaires in Afghanistan.



Cabinet. Nuri's return to power came as a surprise to the nation, but no full explanation of what had taken place behind the scenes was ever made. Questions were asked in Parliament, but no statement was made in spite of the fact that one deputy raised the matter in the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>1</sup> On 26 February Nuri made a speech, which was broadcast, in which he tried to give an explanation of the recent changes in Government. He referred to plots and political crimes which were the cause of his resignation on 18 February and stated that his desire was 'to take the necessary steps, before it was too late, to prevent further political crimes'. After his resignation, said General Nuri, the Regent had at once begun consultations for the formation of a new Cabinet. 'While we were awaiting the end of the crisis I was confronted', he added, 'with the urgent necessity [on the evening of 21 February] of forming a new Cabinet as soon as possible in view of certain unexpected developments in the internal as well as the external situation.' He went on to expatiate on the dangers of political crimes, to explain his foreign policy, and to lay down his programme of reform. With regard to political crimes he said:

The political crimes and plots to which I have referred have swept over the country during the last few years threatening its very foundations, disturbing its tranquillity, harming its reputation abroad, and hindering its progress. . . . Political crimes are somewhat akin to fire. Any person can cause an outbreak of fire, and similarly almost anybody can cause an outbreak of political crime when and where he wishes to do so. Just as an outbreak of fire cannot be left until it burns itself out, political crime must be combated with the utmost energy lest it should imperil the safety of the whole country.

With regard to foreign policy he said:

In our foreign policy we have always followed the lines laid down for us by our great King, his late Majesty King Faysal, aiming at the strengthening of Iraq and the consolidation of friendly relations with countries to which we were attached by bonds of kinship and mutual interest, at the same time defending our frontiers against any possible attack and safeguarding the country from falling under the domination of any foreign Power.

Turning to his future programme of reform, Nuri referred to the murder of Rustum Haydar and promised to give the matter his most careful consideration in order to reassure the public that justice

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 9th Sess., 1939-40, p. 160. See also *Proc. Senate*, 14th Sess., 1939-40, pp. 129-31, 132, 134.

would prevail. As to specific points of reform, he promised: (1) All the precautionary measures required to ensure the defence of the country in the face of recent international developments; (2) the amendment of the constitution and the reform of Electoral Law; (3) the carrying out of reform proposals in the *Diwaniya liwa*, which were approved by the Council of Ministers a few weeks ago. Steps would also be taken to settle land disputes in that *liwa*. 'Finally,' Nuri concluded, 'I am glad to be able to announce that I shall do my best to open a new chapter in the history of Iraq in which there will be respect for the constitution and fuller co-operation between the leaders of the country.'

In this speech Nuri appeared in the eyes of the nation as the enemy of 'political crimes' which had brought the country to the brink of destruction, and promised to contribute to its progress by offering an alluring programme of reform which would 'open a new chapter in the history of Iraq'. By political crimes, however, he hardly meant the interference of the army in politics, but he sought rather to discredit his political opponents by implying that they were implicated in the assassination of Rustum Haydar. As to his interest in amending both the constitution and the Electoral Law, as a means of strengthening parliamentary control, his efforts bore no immediate fruit, but the work was carried on later.

Investigation of the murder of Haydar was continued after Nuri's return to power, and the court martial, it will be recalled, acquitted six of the defendants and sentenced only Tawfiq to death. This verdict, however, which was meant to close the whole affair, led to further disagreement in General Nuri's reconstructed Cabinet. Salih Jabr was dissatisfied with the way in which the investigation was carried out and threatened to resign. Persuasion to induce him to remain in the Cabinet did not avail and his resignation was finally accepted on 17 March, only two weeks before Nuri himself submitted the resignation of the whole Cabinet.

Nuri's purpose, by placing General Husayn Fawzi and his two supporters ('Umari and Yamulki) on the retired list, had been achieved; thus he reverted to the plan of relinquishing the premiership in favour of Rashid Ali in order to direct Iraq's foreign policy in accordance with his own ideas. Nuri told the present writer that the lack of solidarity in his Cabinet had compelled him to resign, but in reality his main purpose was to secure Rashid Ali's support for a foreign policy which was not popular in the country. In his letter of

resignation to the Regent on 31 March Nuri enumerated the various difficulties which had confronted his Cabinet and compelled him to resign. In accordance with constitutional procedure (rather than by resorting to another coup d'état), he concluded his letter, 'I am opening the way for my successor by submitting my resignation to your Royal Highness, thus hoping to secure real and sincere co-operation among the prominent leaders of the country. . . .'

## CHAPTER VIII

## FURTHER COUPS D'ÉTAT. II

1940-1

## THE RASHID 'ALI GOVERNMENT

FROM the time when General Nuri tendered his resignation it was agreed (between Nuri and Rashid Ali, with the Regent's approval) that Rashid would form the new Government. The recurrence of a military coup d'état and the dismissal of Rashid's supporters from the army (General Husayn Fawzi and his associates) made Rashid feel uneasy about continual army intervention in politics and his future dependence upon the pleasure of the leading Four army officers. He realized that Nuri's return to power was accomplished only through the support of the Four and that his position would be assured only by alienating their loyalty from Nuri. Consequently Rashid Ali at first declined to form a Government; and consented only after the pleading of the Four, of Generals Nuri and Taha, and of Haj Amin al-Husayni, Mufti of Jerusalem, whose intercession was sought by the Four.<sup>1</sup>

Rashid Ali was of the opinion, as indeed were Nuri as-Sa'id and other politicians, that the army's intervention in politics was caused mainly by the dissension and rivalry among the politicians. Their solution of the problem was, therefore, to restore to the Regent such powers as the constitution provided by securing a pledge from the leading politicians to abstain from inciting the army officers to interfere in politics. Rashid Ali, as Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, enthusiastically supported the proposal since, he thought, such a pledge would deny his rival politicians the use of the army as a tool against him when he should be Premier.

The Regent, who was naturally anxious to reassert his authority, called a meeting at the Royal *Diwan* on 14 March 1940, attended by all former Prime Ministers, over which he presided; and, after a long and protracted discussion, a pledge of support for any group in

<sup>1</sup> See Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, p. 136.



power was put on record, signed by all present, and given to the Regent. The text of the pledge follows:<sup>1</sup>

In view of our earnest desire to co-operate and leave aside [every possibility of] friction in the present grave international circumstances, and in order to realize the interests of our country and ensure the normal constitutional procedure, it was decided:

(1) A national coalition Government should be formed, whose head would be selected by His Highness the Regent in accordance with constitutional and traditional consultation.

(2) All former Prime Ministers and public men should co-operate with such a Government, whether [they were members] of it or not. Those who could not join such a Government for any cogent reason, should [not only] refrain from opposition but should co-operate with it.

(3) This agreement is to be signed and submitted to His Highness the Regent.

(Signed) Jamil al-Midfa'i, Tawfiq as-Suwaydi,  
Naji Shawkat, Naji as-Suwaydi, Nuri as-Sa'id,  
Rashid 'Ali al-Gaylani, 'Ali Jawdat.

Upon Nuri's resignation the Regent immediately invited Rashid Ali to form a new Government on 31 March. Rashid Ali assumed the portfolio of Interior in addition to the premiership, while Foreign Affairs and Defence were reserved for Generals Nuri and Taha. Naji Shawkat was given Justice and Naji as-Suwaydi Finance.<sup>2</sup> The new Government was then hailed by the local press as a 'Cabinet of national coalition', since four former Prime Ministers had joined it with a view to inspiring confidence and stability throughout the country during the war.

Rashid Ali made a favourable impression at the start of his regime by declaring the abolition of martial law on 3 April, releasing a number of political prisoners, and issuing orders to the various departments to instil efficiency and ensure justice for the people. As Acting Minister of Interior, Rashid Ali paid especial attention to settling a number of pending administrative issues, such as the long-standing conflict between Muhsin Abu Tabikh, a great friend of his,

<sup>1</sup> See text in the Regent's speech which was broadcast on 14 July 1941 following the collapse of the Rashid Ali regime. Neither the date nor the circumstances which preceded the signing of the document were stated in that speech. See *Speech by His Royal Highness Amir 'Abd al-Ilah, Regent of Iraq* (Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1941), pp. 5-6 (in Arabic).

<sup>2</sup> The other members of the Cabinet were: 'Umar Nazmi for Public Works and Transportation, Muhammad Amin Zaki for Economics, Sadiq al-Bassam for Education, and Ra'uf al-Bahrani for Social Affairs.

and Husayn al-Muqawtar; and that between Shaykhs Khawwam and Shanshul.<sup>1</sup> These cases, involving land disputes, were referred to arbitration committees and settled amicably during August and September. Further, a decree enabling the Government to intern any person who might stir up public opinion or endanger order was issued on 30 May. This decree, though not approved by both Houses of Parliament (it was passed by the Chamber of Deputies on 13 November, but only tabled by the Senate), was later enforced by succeeding Cabinets against the supporters of Rashid Ali during the entire war period.<sup>2</sup>

In general, however, Rashid Ali did not commit himself to a new policy, but merely declared in Parliament on 6 April that the programme of his Cabinet was 'not different from those of most of his predecessors, and more especially that of Nuri as-Sa'id, most of the members of which are in the present Cabinet'. With regard to foreign policy, Rashid Ali stated that his Cabinet's aims were:

(1) The strengthening of the principles of Arab alliance and the continuation of our endeavours to achieve the national aspirations of the neighbouring Arab countries . . . ; (2) the strengthening of [our] friendly relations and alliance with Great Britain, *based on mutual interest*; (3) the strengthening of [our] friendly relations and co-operation with the Powers of the Sa'dabad Pact; (4) the continuation of [our] friendly relations with *all States which are friendly towards us*.<sup>3</sup>

The official policy of the Rashid Ali Government was the continuation of the Anglo-Iraqi alliance. But the pan-Arab elements, who had become active in politics, counted on a radical change in policy, since the new Prime Minister, owing both to his background as a former Ikha member (who had violently opposed the signing of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty) and to his association with the pan-Arab group in Baghdad, was not expected to be enthusiastic toward the Anglo-Iraqi alliance. When Rashid Ali came to power, however, he at first tried not to effect a change in Iraq's foreign policy; but when analysed in the light of subsequent events his statement of policy is seen to be so carefully phrased in broad and general terms that it

<sup>1</sup> See p. 57 above.

<sup>2</sup> On 21 Mar. 1946 the Senate rejected the decree (the constitutionality of which was dubious) on the grounds that the circumstances which prompted the Government to issue the decree no longer existed. See *Proc. Senate*, 20th Sess., 1945-6, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 9th Sess., 1939 40, pp. 321-2 (italics by the present writer).

well fitted in with his actual conduct during his tenure of office until he was forced to resign in January 1941.

#### THE RISING TIDE OF ARAB NATIONALISM

Contrary to what he had expected, not only did General Nuri fail to influence the course of Iraq's foreign policy after Rashid Ali had become Premier, but, more significant, the latter consciously moved to reverse Nuri's policy. From the outbreak of the war to the fall of France (June 1940) opinion in Iraq had so radically changed that Rashid Ali, undoubtedly to his great satisfaction, drifted into the leadership of a movement which had been long in the making.

The pan-Arab ideology, it will be recalled,<sup>1</sup> became widely spread among the politically conscious people of Iraq; and it had become the traditional policy for the Iraqi Government to work for the realization of that ideology. With Syria and Palestine under foreign control, Iraq had naturally become the hot-bed of Arab nationalism. The pan-Arabs looked upon Iraq, soon after her emancipation from the mandate, as the most promising country to achieve the pan-Arab union. The pan-Arabs who had found refuge in Iraq, in co-operation with the Iraqi ultra-nationalists, at once began to revive the pan-Arab dream in the minds of the Iraqis and to fire the imagination of the new generation with the idea of restoring the Arab Empire. The pan-Arabs argued that the existing regime in Iraq was an artificial creation of Britain designed to maintain her own imperial interests and therefore unworthy of survival; the only truly Arab national regime would be that in which Iraq would form part of a united Arab State. Such ideas were widely propagated among the army officers by a number of influential nationalists, and in high schools and colleges by scores of Syrian and Palestinian teachers who were employed by the Iraqi Government.

The coming of al-Haj Amin al-Husayni, former Mufti of Jerusalem, to Baghdad on 16 October 1939 opened a new chapter in the development of pan-Arabism in Iraq.<sup>2</sup> Before his arrival the work of the pan-Arabs lacked leadership and direction, which he not only supplied by

<sup>1</sup> See p. 109 above.

<sup>2</sup> The Mufti had previously (Oct. 1937) fled from Jerusalem to Lebanon in disguise on account of his activities in stirring up terrorism in Palestine, but when the war broke out he sought further freedom of movement in Baghdad. For an account of his escape see his *Memoirs* in *Akhbar al-Yawm*, 28 Sept. 1957 (later referred to as the Mufti's *Memoirs*) and M. Pearlman, *The Mufti of Jerusalem* (London, 1947).

his dominating personality, but also translated what was more in the nature of a popular ideology into a definite movement which Rashid Ali, supported by leading army officers, was committed to carry out. At the outset, when Nuri was still Prime Minister, the Mufti's arrival was embarrassing to the Government; but such a renowned Arab leader, who had become a popular idol in the eyes of the Arabs, was bound to be received as the welcome guest of the Iraqi Government. He was lavishly entertained by leading Iraqi politicians, including Prime Minister Nuri as-Sa'id, and the Iraqi Parliament voted £18,000 for his personal expenses (in addition to further sums paid from other sources). The Mufti pledged the Government not to engage in political activities, but very soon after Rashid Ali had become Prime Minister he found himself, not unwillingly, inevitably involved in politics which he tried to conduct from behind the scenes.

The Mufti maintained outwardly cordial relations with all Iraqi public men; but for the realization of his political objective he distinguished between those whom he could enlist for the promotion of the pan-Arab movement and those who had a strong attachment to the Iraqi regime. The Iraqi nationalists were divided into two schools of thought. The first may be called the pan-Arab school, which advocated ultra-nationalistic ideas and was by its very nature opposed to the two dominating Powers in the Arab world, Great Britain and France, since it was greatly disappointed in the way these Powers were handling the Palestine and Syrian problems. This school was made up of such leading politicians as Naji as-Suwaydi, Taha al-Hashimi,<sup>1</sup> Yunis as-Sab'awi, and Sa'id al-Haj Thabit. (The dominant army officers, in particular the Four Colonels, belonged to this school.) Prime Minister Rashid Ali and Naji Shawkat, Minister of Justice, who previously were well known for their Iraqi particularism, had also come forward in support of the pan-Arab school. The other school of thought was more moderate and reflected the more mature ideas of the Iraqi elder politicians who were, on the whole, favourably disposed towards Great Britain and foresaw grave danger to the Arab world from the identification of Arab nationalism with totalitarian ideologies. To this school belonged such outstanding politicians as Nuri as-Sa'id, Jamil al-Midfai, Ali Jawdat, Tawfiq as-Suwaydi,

<sup>1</sup> General Taha always posed as a person with divided loyalty: he held pan-Arab ideas and always sympathized with the Four Colonels (whom he regarded as his disciples); but he was also strongly attached to General Nuri and, under his influence, supported his policies. Taha displayed, perhaps unconsciously, great divergence between his theories and practices. Cf. Peterson, p. 143.



Salih Jabr, and Rustum Haydar.<sup>1</sup> This school claimed to represent more closely the moderate policy and attitude of King Faysal I towards Britain. Nevertheless the pan-Arab school also claimed to derive its ideology from the broad pan-Arab ideas of Faysal, which, however, were not clearly evident in his actual conduct of foreign policy. Owing to the deterioration of world conditions and to the rivalry among the Iraqi politicians, the pan-Arab group had become predominant in Iraqi society. The Mufti gave his support to this school.

The Mufti formed his own unofficial government, aided by a competent staff, drawn in the main from his former associates.<sup>2</sup> He was in the meantime in constant and intimate contact with leading Syrian nationalists, who were residing in Baghdad as political refugees (such as Jamil Mardam and Shukri al-Quwatli), and Iraqi pan-Arab leaders (such as Naji Shawkat, Naji as-Suwaydi, Taha al-Hashimi, and the Four Colonels). From among these leaders a small circle had been formed, under the leadership of the Mufti, which discussed the possibility of Arab-Nazi collaboration. When contact with the Axis Powers had been established, the Mufti's circle of pan-Arab leaders took more definite shape and an 'Arab Committee', composed of influential Arab leaders, was organized in whose name the Mufti conducted secret negotiations. This is the 'Committee' which the Mufti's Secretary specifically referred to in his negotiations with the German Foreign Office in August 1940<sup>3</sup> and which subsequently became the policy-making body under the Rashid Ali regime (April-May 1941). After the collapse of that regime Rashid Ali denied that such a committee, of which he was supposed to have been a member, ever existed.<sup>4</sup> However, in an exchange of letters between the Mufti and Naji Shawkat in 1942, the latter supported the Mufti's Secretary's statement that an Arab Committee, composed of seven members, had been in existence, of which Rashid Ali was a member and to whom he took an oath of allegiance in February 1941.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These politicians, it will be recalled, were themselves divided on certain domestic issues such as the Nuri and the Midfa'i groups.

<sup>2</sup> These included Jamal al-Husayni, Amin al-Tamimi, Shaykh Hasan Abu al-Sa'ud, Muhammad Ishaq Darwish, Munif al-Husayni, and Rasim al-Khalidi. Musa al-'Alami acted as legal adviser and Colonel Fawzi al-Qawuqchi as military adviser.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 183 below.

<sup>4</sup> The writer's interview with Rashid Ali in Cairo (10 Apr. 1950). See also *al-Akhbar* (Cairo), 2 Sept. 1957.

<sup>5</sup> For text of the exchange of letters see *al-Akhbar*, 1 Sept. 1957. The seven members of the committee were the following: the Mufti, Rashid Ali, Naji

Nevertheless Rashid Ali was possibly right in maintaining that there was no official committee of which he was a member. The secret 'Committee of the Seven', to which the exchange of letters between the Mufti and Naji Shawkat referred, the date of which was given by Sabbagh in his *Memoirs* as 28 February 1941, must be distinguished from the 'Arab Committee' referred to both in the German documents and the *Memoirs* of the Mufti's Secretary, in whose name the Mufti conducted his negotiations with the Axis Powers in the summer of 1940. The Arab Committee was understood to have been composed of leading pan-Arab leaders, while the Committee of Seven was made up, with the exception of the Mufti, of Iraqi leaders. The present writer is of the opinion that the Mufti had conducted personal exchanges of views with pan-Arab leaders with whom he had contact in Baghdad, including Rashid Ali and prominent Iraqi army officers, and formulated the views given in the document which his Secretary, Kamal Haddad, presented to the German Foreign Office as the demands of the Arab Committee. The Committee of Seven, of which Rashid Ali, despite his denial, seems to have been a member, was formed in February 1941, its membership being derived from among those who constituted the pan-Arab circle with whom the Mufti was in constant touch.<sup>1</sup>

Connected with the Mufti's circle of Arab leaders there were scores of other pan-Arab supporters who had either been indirectly influenced by the Mufti or followed their own course of action. The most prominent in the latter category was Dr Amin Ruwayha who, as honorary physician to the German Legation in Baghdad, acted as a link between many an Arab leader and Axis representatives.<sup>2</sup> Dr Ruwayha was a close friend of prominent Iraqi and other Arab leaders. He was also in touch with leading Iraqi army officers. All these pan-Arab leaders became exceedingly active after the arrival of in Baghdad the Mufti who, after Dr Grobba's departure, supplied leadership and inspiration to all pan-Arabs.

Pan-Arab ideas found fertile soil among the younger generation in

Shawkat, Yunis as-Sab'awi, Salah ad-Din as-Sabbagh, Fahmi Sa'id, and Mahmud Salman. The place in which these members gathered together was the residence of the Mufti, situated in Zahawi Street, and the date was 28 Feb. 1941. See Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, p. 218.

<sup>1</sup> The present writer's opinion is based on his personal interviews with Rashid Ali, the Mufti, Naji Shawkat, and Jamil Mardam Bey. Cf. public statements made re the Committee by Rashid Ali and the Mufti in *al-Akhbar*, 2 Sept. 1957.

<sup>2</sup> The writer's interview with Dr Fritz Grobba in Bonn on 7 July 1958.

Iraq. In the army these ideas were revived after Bakr Sidqi's followers had been eliminated and the Four Colonels virtually became the controlling authority behind the scenes. The pan-Arab ideology was vividly expounded and diffused by such national societies as the Muthanna Club,<sup>1</sup> founded in Baghdad in 1935, the Jawwal Society (an associate of the Muthanna Club), and the Futuwwa organization, supported and popularized by Syrian and Palestinian nationalists in Iraq.<sup>2</sup> Colonel Fawzi al-Qawuqchi and leading members of the Muthanna Club were in close touch with a number of leading army officers. The Palestine Defence Society, under the leadership of General Taha al-Hashimi, supplied funds for the activities of the pan-Arab leaders. The Muthanna Club, whose nominal head was Dr Sa'ib Shawkat, brother of Naji Shawkat, was at the outset moderate in tone. The club, whose activities and exploits had increasing influence, was later dominated by a few ultra-nationalists who had outspoken totalitarian ideas.

The pan-Arab ideology was widely discussed and diffused in almost all the Government schools, and was perhaps best expounded in a readable volume entitled *These are Our [National] Aims: Those who Believe in Them Are on Our Side*,<sup>3</sup> which Dr Sami Shawkat, a prominent member of the Muthanna Club, had published in 1939. Though Shawkat was responsible for the main substance of the book, he had not himself written the entire work. He professed to be a firm believer in and a promoter of the pan-Arab ideology, with a totalitarian *Weltanschauung*. As Director-General of Education in 1933 and 1939, and Minister of Education in 1940, he was able, with the aid of a number of able pan-Arab teachers, to fire the imagination of the Iraqi youth. In his celebrated speech on the 'Art of Death',<sup>4</sup> which Shawkat had given in Baghdad in the autumn of 1933, he expounded in simple but forceful language his doctrine of power. Copies of the speech, which had great influence on the Iraqi youth, were circulated and read in all the Government high schools. In it Shawkat played on the emotions with his apparently cogent argument

<sup>1</sup> Named after al-Muthanna Ibn Haritha al-Shaybani, one of the leading commanders during the Muslim conquest of southern Iraq in the seventh century A.D.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Futuwwa' was organized after a medieval prototype, on the basis of chivalry and martial spirit. For text of the Futuwwa regulation, see *Government Gazette*, no. 1299, 15 May 1939. See also Ettore Rossi, 'L'Istituzione Scolastico Militare "al-Futuwwah" nell'Iraq', *Oriente Moderno*, Apr. 1940, pp. 157-76.

<sup>3</sup> Sami Shawkat, *Hadhihi Ahdafuna: Man Amana Biha Fahwa Minna* (Baghdad, 1939).

<sup>4</sup> *Sina'at al-Mawt*.

that countries like India and Egypt, though they were rich and culturally advanced, were not yet independent States. Countries like Afghanistan and Yaman, on the other hand, though poor and backward, were independent. 'Wealth and knowledge, therefore', declared Shawkat, 'were not the sole means of destroying the foundation of imperialism and shaking off the fetters of submission.' There is, he added, another more important factor which 'shields the honour of nations and prevents their submission to imperialism—it is power'. By power he meant 'the perfection of the art of death'. If life were a right inherent to the individual, so was death in the defence of the life and honour of nations.<sup>1</sup>

In another speech Shawkat developed the doctrine of the 'Rugged Life'. He appealed to the students to abandon the easy and comfortable life (which was enjoyed by hardly any save a few boys of well-to-do families) and urged them to follow the life of the Arabs in the early Islamic period. He aroused more interest by dwelling on the glorious past of the Arabs and on the future possibilities of their unity.<sup>2</sup> In a speech given on 16 March 1939 to high school teachers of history, he went so far as to declare that those history books which discredited the Arabs were to be burned, not excepting the greatest work on the philosophy of history by Ibn Khaldun.<sup>3</sup>

The teachings of Sami Shawkat and his pan-Arab associates were reinforced by the Government-sponsored Futuwwa organization, which required all high school boys and their teachers to wear military uniforms, to be trained in the use of rifles and guns, and to be disciplined as soldiers. Shawkat, himself wearing uniform, led on horseback the colourful parades of Iraqi youth. The Futuwwa organization was only a step in the preparation of the new generation for the day when the entire nation was to be called on to realize the pan-Arab dream. The Futuwwa had such an immense appeal, encouraged by almost all national organizations and the press, that it elevated its leader to Cabinet rank.<sup>4</sup> But Shawkat's sincerity was seriously questioned when he was the first to desert the Futuwwa when the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3. Dr Sami Shawkat's opponents commented on this doctrine that 'the art of death can be perfected only by an ignorant doctor' (Sami Shawkat himself being a doctor of medicine).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6, 30-33, 43-45, 57-61, 62-64.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44. See an account of the gathering in *al-Bilad*, 17 Mar. 1939.

<sup>4</sup> Sami Shawkat had long been a close follower of General Nuri; it was perhaps Nuri's plan to control education, unaware of the havoc wrought by his protégé, that prompted him to raise the leader of the Futuwwa to Cabinet rank.



day had come for it to contribute its share in the war against Britain.<sup>1</sup>

#### AXIS VERSUS BRITISH POLICY IN IRAQ

At this point it may be asked why Iraq and her leaders, who had developed amicable relations with Great Britain since 1932, now began to hesitate as to the wisdom of living up to their obligations to her. It is true that Axis propaganda had aroused the pan-Arabs against Britain, but it was in fact the latent anti-British feeling which, under changed world conditions, was fully exploited by the opponents of Anglo-Iraqi collaboration. The revival of anti-British feeling was not an isolated phenomenon confined to Iraq. The failure of the general Arab nationalist movement to achieve the unity and independence of the Arab countries was one cause, and there were other factors peculiar to Iraq.

Of the circumstances confined to Iraq, the fact that her emancipation from the mandate system took place at a very critical period in the history of the League of Nations was one. It was a period which was unfavourable to the Western democracies. A year before Iraq achieved her independence, in 1931, Japan had defied the League and invaded Manchuria. In 1933, a year after Iraq's independence, the Nazis came into power in Germany and immediately afterwards embarked on an active propaganda in the Middle East unfavourable to Britain and France, and exploited certain grievances against them. Iraq's rise to statehood was thus neither achieved in the high days of the League, when the *amour propre* of the new State could have been gratified by its attaining a dignified seat in a world Assembly, nor in peaceful and salutary conditions in the Arab world—pan-Arab feeling had just been revived in Syria and Palestine in consequence of Syria's refusal to ratify the abortive Treaty of 1933, and of the sudden increase in Zionist immigration into Palestine following the Nazi rise to power in Germany.

The latent causes of any nationalist upheaval in the Arab world were inherent in the unsatisfactory settlement following the First World War. Great Britain had promised the Arabs the realization of their national aspirations, namely freedom from Turkish control and the establishment of a united Arab Kingdom comprising, in the main,

<sup>1</sup> Sami Shawkat's close association with Nuri, although his brothers Naji and Sa'ib Shawkat supported the Rashid 'Ali Government, prompted him to disassociate himself from the Futuwwa when this organization supported Rashid 'Ali.

the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula. By the peace settlement, however, the Fertile Crescent was neatly divided into separate entities under British and French mandate, while the Arabian Peninsula, which was left to work out its own salvation, was exposed to foreign influence on its borders. The Arab nationalists, needless to say, were far from satisfied by such an arrangement, since they were not prepared to accept any settlement short of unity and complete independence. They wanted independence as a matter of right, as embodied in Great Britain's pledges to Sharif Husayn, rather than as a matter of capacity for self-government as laid down in the mandate system. Failing to achieve unity and independence, the Arab nationalists naturally contended that both Britain and France had deliberately followed a policy of *divide et impera* by creating small and weak States in order to satisfy their imperialist designs. Britain, perhaps, would have allowed a greater degree of unity among the Arab countries if she were the sole European Power in the Arab world; but the insistence of France in claiming Syria and Lebanon, as assigned to her in the Sykes-Picot agreement of 16 May 1916, had decidedly aggravated the tendency of dividing the Arab world into separate spheres of influence.<sup>1</sup>

To argue that France was solely responsible for Arab grievances would relieve Britain from any responsibilities in Arab affairs. Britain, as will be pointed out later, had her own share of such responsibilities. The Arab nationalists, needless to say, regarded Britain as just as responsible as France for the institution of the mandate system and as solely responsible for the creation of the Jewish National Home in Palestine.

Unlike France, however, Britain realized the strong national grievances of the Arabs and was ready to follow a more sympathetic policy towards them by recognizing, though slowly and piecemeal, certain fundamental national aspirations. The mandate system was from the very beginning applied through treaties of alliance in which certain measures of self-government were granted. The continual anti-mandate agitation eventually induced Britain to bring that system to an end in 1932. It was thus that the much criticized British

<sup>1</sup> This is well evidenced in the Husayn-MacMahon correspondence, which implicitly recognized for France the littoral of Syria lying to the west of the district of Damascus, Homs, and Aleppo, but left for the Arabs the rest of the Arab world to be recognized as an 'Arab Kingdom'. See *Correspondence between Sir Henry MacMahon . . . and the Sherif Hussein, July 1915-March 1916*, Cmd. 5957 (London, H.M.S.O., 1939).

tutelage and interference in the internal affairs of Iraq came to an end. Britain sought by this arrangement to discharge her obligations towards the League of Nations and to satisfy the angry clamours of the Iraqi nationalists for independence. She also, perhaps, sought to open a new chapter in Anglo-Arab relations with a view to coming to an eventual full understanding with the Arabs once the other pending issues (in particular that of Palestine) were successfully settled.

This approach to Anglo-Arab relations unfortunately lacked the co-operation of Britain's partner in Arab affairs. Inspired by British policy in Iraq as well as by the strength of Arab nationalism, when France finally decided to follow a liberal policy, the new policy, which was initiated by the Blum Government, was soon repudiated when that Government fell. The Blum Government negotiated the treaties of 1936 with Syria and Lebanon on the model of the Iraqi treaty. The provisions of these treaties would have satisfied the Syrian nationalists and brought French policy in line with British, but after the fall of the Blum Government France contributed to the intensification of Arab nationalism.

Finally, Britain had to settle the burning Palestine problem if her efforts were to bear fruit in reconciling Arab opinion. Attempts at coming to an understanding with the Arabs during 1936-7 by means of partition,<sup>1</sup> or local and municipal autonomy for Arabs and Jews,<sup>2</sup> were deemed unacceptable, and the Arabs resorted to a relentless boycott which lasted till 1938, when the Arab Heads of States offered their mediation to stop the boycott. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald (after a brief round-table conference held in London), issued in May 1939 the White Paper on Palestine.<sup>3</sup> This scheme, which virtually put an end to Zionist aspirations to unlimited immigration by declaring that the Jewish National Home had been achieved, came very near to meeting Arab demands except, perhaps, for a certain vagueness concerning the establishment of an Arab Government and the possibility of future renewal of immigration with Arab consent. The Mufti and his party, who had at that time sought refuge in Syria, declared their dissatisfaction with the proposals embodied in the White Paper. The British Government, regardless of objections from either Arab or Jewish quarters, and to the satisfaction of the moderate Arab group,

<sup>1</sup> See Palestine Royal Commission Report (London, 1937), Cmd. 5479.

<sup>2</sup> The Palestine Partition Commission Report (London, 1938), Cmd. 5854.

<sup>3</sup> Palestine: Statement of Policy (London, 1939), Cmd. 6019.

declared that it would proceed with its new policy. Thus the door for an understanding was left ajar should the extremist Arab party decide to renew the negotiations.

The mission of Colonel S. F. Newcombe, when he came out to Baghdad in July 1940 on semi-official business, gave the false impression that Britain was yielding to the Mufti's party. Colonel Newcombe tried to find out what the minimum demands of the pan-Arabs were; he pointed out that the British Government had shown willingness to consider these in an unofficial way. General Nuri, then Foreign Minister, held several meetings at which the Mufti's representatives, Jamal al-Husayni and Musa al-'Alami, were present. Many schemes were proposed for Syria and Palestine which Colonel Newcombe agreed to transmit to the British Government. The schemes for Syria ranged from occupation by the Iraqi army to a polite démarche to the Vichy authorities by the Arabs calling for a return of constitutional government in Syria. With regard to Palestine, a concrete proposal was made for the settlement of the problem. The White Paper of 1939 was to be accepted as the basis of the Palestine settlement and the transition period was to be fixed at ten years. The Iraqi Government decided, in August, that in return for such a settlement it would make a formal declaration of war on the Axis Powers and place one-half of its forces (two divisions) at the disposal of the Middle East Command for service outside Iraq. Nuri told the present writer<sup>1</sup> that he left for Cairo to communicate this decision to General Wavell, and the whole arrangement was referred to London, but there was no reply from the British Government. On 26 August a declaration was made to the effect that the British Government could not depart from their declared policy in regard to Palestine.<sup>2</sup> It was most unfortunate that the Newcombe mission, which raised high hopes among the pan-Arabs in Baghdad, should result in such a sharp rejection of the Arab proposals. Not only was this declaration construed to mean that no just settlement was contemplated in London, but it also aroused cynicism and bitterness and drove the pan-Arab and anti-British elements to

<sup>1</sup> In an interview at his house in Baghdad on 16 May 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Churchill, to the great disappointment of the Arabs, went further than that. Sharply disagreeing with Lord Lloyd, whom he regarded as 'a convinced anti-Zionist and pro-Arab', he warmly welcomed Zionist requests that they should be equipped for their self-defence, in an attempt to relieve the British garrison from Palestine for service elsewhere. See Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War* (London, 1950), ii. 153, 559, 564; and George Kirk, *The Middle East in the War 1939-45*, pp. 64, 237-8.



seek the realization of their national aspirations by approaching Britain's enemies.

The Axis Powers fully exploited Arab grievances. Their broadcasts to the Arabs from Bari and Berlin gave lavish assurances of a brighter and more prosperous life if they won the war. The widespread Nazi propaganda, reinforced by Hitler's dazzling successes in Poland, Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries, and France, caught the imagination of the Arabs, who saw their salvation from British and French control in ultimate German victory.

The arrival in Iraq of Dr Fritz Grobba,<sup>1</sup> the German Minister, in February 1932 was a significant event in German-Iraqi relations. Although he was not a Nazi (indeed his loyalty to the Nazi regime was in doubt), Grobba's knowledge of the languages (Arabic and Turkish) and of the people of the Middle East well fitted him for the post which he had occupied with such great distinction. Grobba and his wife made it their policy to maintain cordial relations with all the leading politicians and army officers, and at the outset with the British community too.<sup>2</sup> His activities were augmented by several other Germans either in the service of the Iraqi Government (such as Dr Julius Jordan at the Museum) or ostensibly in business, who cultivated the society of leading public men and army officers.

The first success which Grobba achieved was during the abortive Hikmat-Bakr regime during 1936-7. Grobba reported that Bakr Sidqi, Chief of the General Staff, consulted him almost daily, and Hikmat Sulayman, then Prime Minister, about twice a week. Since Bakr, who had married an Austrian wife, was an outspoken anglophobe, he did not expect delivery of arms from Britain under the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930. At his request Colonel Heins, a former member of the German General Staff, came to Baghdad as the con-

<sup>1</sup> Grobba was at first appointed as chargé d'affaires; he became Minister in October 1932, immediately after Iraq was admitted to membership of the League of Nations.

<sup>2</sup> 'Both Dr. Grobba and his wife', says Sir Maurice Peterson, 'made it their business to be more British than the British in all the activities of the foreign community. . . . In the English church, dedicated as a memorial of the Great War, they sat in the pew next to my own and the fine organ which the Church possessed was the gift of the German community. More sinister in my view because less obvious than the German Minister were the activities of his wife. Frau Grobba, who limped her way with regularity into almost every British house and to every British sick-bed in Baghdad had as her speciality the collection of rumour affecting the British community, to be passed on, after due embellishment, to suitable Iraqi circles in which it might be possible to discredit the British connexion' (Peterson, pp. 144-5).

sultant of an industrial firm and worked out plans for the defence of Kurdistan by the Iraqi army in the event of Baghdad falling in a conflict with Britain. Bakr also asked for German arms. At his request representatives of Rheinmetall-Borsig in Berlin and of Otto Wolf in Cologne came out to Baghdad for negotiations. An order for arms valued at 5 million marks was agreed upon, although not all the arms were received,<sup>1</sup> and an order to Rheinmetall-Borsig for eighteen anti-aircraft guns with 18,000 shells (valued at about a million marks) was delivered in 1937. A former captain in the German artillery, in the guise of a representative of Rheinmetall-Borsig, arrived in Baghdad to train Iraqi officers in the use of the guns. Moreover, when Baldur von Schirach, the Reich Youth Leader, stopped in Baghdad on his return flight from Tehran in the autumn of 1937, he had an audience with King Ghazi and suggested that he should pay attention to the Futuwwa movement as an expression of the Arab nationalist youth movement. He also invited the King to send a Futuwwa delegation to Nuremberg to attend the parade of the Nazi Party convention in September 1938. A delegation of thirty members of the Futuwwa was subsequently sent, received by the Führer, and made a two-weeks' tour of Germany as guests of the Hitler Youth.

These activities, whereby Grobba tried to win Iraq to Germany's side, were greatly restricted after the fall of the Hikmat-Bakr regime. The new British Ambassador to Iraq, Sir Maurice Peterson, who succeeded Sir Archibald Clark Kerr (later Lord Inverchapel) in 1938, found the Midfa'i Government disposed to undo what Grobba had done under the previous regime. Peterson gives us a few instances of what Grobba had accomplished. In 1936 Dr Sudhoff, of the German Ministry of Education, visited Iraq and recommended the founding of a modern technical college in Baghdad. In 1938 the German Government offered, through the intermediary of a German society, to provide the money and equipment for such a college. General Nuri, who had just returned to power in December 1938, was suspicious of the proposal; but some of his colleagues, Naji Shawkat in particular, supported it. Peterson had no difficulty in securing the rejection of the proposal; 'but to make assurance doubly sure', he tells us, 'I invoked the generous co-operation of Lord Cadman and the Oil Company to produce a similar offer from British sources which was accepted'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hikmat Sulayman in an interview with the writer, complained that the British, when they heard the news, sabotaged this arrangement. This actually happened after the collapse of his regime.

<sup>2</sup> Peterson, pp. 144-5.

But Peterson did not stop at this. His protests to Midfa'i and Nuri against Nazi activities resulted in no small measure in limiting their influx into Iraq.

But of the more permanent German visitors [Peterson added] I secured . . . the expulsion of the two who seemed to me the most dangerous, one an archaeologist of repute [Dr Jordan] who was for some time in charge of the Baghdad Museum, the other a so-called commercial traveller who cultivated in particular the society of the higher officers of the Iraqi army. In the case of the Grobbas I was powerless to do more than warn both the Iraqis and my own colony to be on their guard—a warning which I repeated on every possible occasion.<sup>1</sup>

The news of Sir Maurice Peterson's transfer to Spain in March 1939, only a year after he had been sent to Iraq, must have been received by Grobba with great relief.<sup>2</sup> Not only did the new British Ambassador, Sir Basil Newton, find the Iraqi Prime Minister (Rashid Ali, who succeeded Nuri in 1940) more difficult to deal with but also world conditions had changed unfavourably towards Britain. The vigilant Grobba resumed his activities with greater ease, since at this time he found a more congenial atmosphere in the rising tide of Arab nationalism and the increasing influx of pan-Arab *émigrés* into Iraq. Grobba reported that he constantly received pan-Arab visitors (Syrian and Palestinian leaders in particular), who always told him about their plans of carrying out revolts against France and Britain, and asked for German arms. He had now thrown off his mask, and his contacts with leading public men were fully exploited to Germany's advantage. It was indeed because of these over-zealous activities that General Nuri, to the great dissatisfaction of the pan-Arab leaders, severed diplomatic relations with Germany when the war broke out. Grobba possibly expected Iraq to assume a strictly neutral attitude at the outset; but Nuri moved too quickly for him in expelling him from Iraq. If he had had his way, Nuri would have declared war on Germany.

<sup>1</sup> Peterson, pp. 144–5.

<sup>2</sup> Peterson says that he received the offer to be the first British Ambassador to the 'New Spain' with mixed emotions. 'With war on the very near horizon', he contended, 'it seemed to me folly on the part of the Foreign Office to change a man who had begun well but had had barely a year at his post. . . . I told the Foreign Secretary [Lord Halifax] in my reply that it gave me a "sense of futility" to be moved again so soon. . . . The Foreign Secretary ignored my caveat and pressed me to accelerate my departure' (ibid., p. 172).

#### STRAINED RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAQ AND GREAT BRITAIN

As has been stated, the Rashid Ali Government did not at the outset commit itself to any pro-Axis policy, and Rashid Ali himself went so far as to declare that his Cabinet would follow the policy of its predecessor. He had, it is true, at no time been friendly towards Great Britain, but he did not return to power this time for the sole object of opposing her. However, Britain's refusal to commit herself to specific pledges in favour of the Arabs (concerning Palestine in particular) put the moderate elements into the background and the extremists, civil and military, began to come to the fore. The deterioration in the international situation was in their favour, but no serious step was taken to strain Anglo-Iraqi relations.

The fall of France in June 1940, however, greatly upset the balance. The prevailing opinion in Iraq was that, after the fall of France, England had no chance of survival. The Iraqi nationalists were seemingly no wiser than those French generals who advised their Prime Minister after their collapse that 'in three weeks England will have her neck wrung like a chicken!' To these nationalists the Anglo-Iraqi alliance had become a liability which put the very existence of their country in jeopardy rather than an asset.

It was at this time of bewilderment and clash of loyalties that Great Britain invoked her Treaty of Alliance with Iraq and brought matters to a head. On 21 June 1940, one day before the formal signing of France's capitulation, Sir Basil Newton sent a note to the Iraqi Government requesting its approval for landing British forces in Basra to pass across Iraqi territory to Haifa in Palestine. On 22 June the Iraqi Government replied favourably to the Ambassador's note; but on 1 July (when relations had become further strained) it sent another note in which it was stated that on referring the British request to the Iraqi High Defence Council it was decided that the landing of British forces was permitted, in accordance with Annexure 7 of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, only if these forces were to be moved in the areas west of a line between the Persian Gulf and the river Euphrates. This stipulation was based on a confidential letter sent to the Iraqi Government by Sir Francis Humphrys, then British High Commissioner in Iraq, on 15 July 1930, which interpreted the term 'movement of forces . . . in transit across Iraq' (Annexure 7) to this effect. Apparently the attitude of the Iraqi Government was to make use of this interpretation in order to avoid committing Iraq to a too



pro-British policy and thus to avoid Axis hostilities. But this attitude was at once questioned by Britain and the issue that followed was essentially at the outset a question of interpreting the treaty. Newton argued that he had invoked Article 4, rather than Annexure 7, of that treaty. This disagreement on the interpretation of the treaty arose in part from its rather vague and general character which Britain had perhaps expected to use to her own advantage. In practice, however, it enabled the Rashid Ali Government to limit help to Britain. It may be asked in what circumstances were Article 4 or Annexure 7 to be applied? There was nothing in the treaty that helped to clarify this. The issue, however, was finally settled on 16 July, when the Rashid Ali Government approved the landing of British forces, but stated that the forces should not stay long on Iraqi territory and that military camps were not to be established.<sup>1</sup> This reflected a sincere desire to remain neutral during the struggle, but also demonstrated the non-cooperative attitude of the Rashid Ali Government.

A more violent issue that arose was in connexion with breaking off diplomatic relations with Italy. Acting upon instructions from the Foreign Office, the British Ambassador held conversations with General Nuri, the Foreign Minister, on 10 June 1940, and an indirect request was made which prompted the latter to submit a memorandum on the matter to the Iraqi Cabinet. Nuri's proposal became the subject of heated controversy among Rashid Ali's ministers, and the Cabinet, in its meeting on 12 June, rejected it, despite the example set by Egypt and the repeated representations of the British Ambassador. Nuri's proposal was supported only by Amin Zaki, Minister of Communications and Works, while it was violently opposed by Naji Shawkat, Minister of Justice.<sup>2</sup> The prevailing opinion was that Iraq's treaty obligations did not require her to take a hostile attitude towards Britain's enemies. 'Absolute neutrality' became the slogan of Rashid Ali's foreign policy and was favourably publicized and commented on in the press. It may be argued in this case, too, that the treaty was general in character and could not be invoked for such a specific action; but it was possible to make a case in favour of Britain as well. Article 1 provided for 'full and frank consultation' in all matters of foreign policy which 'may affect their common interests'.

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on this issue from Rashid Ali's point of view see the *White Book*, which was published in May 1941, but had not been put into circulation, by the Rashid Ali Government, pp. 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> In an interview with the writer, Amin Zaki pointed out that he went so far as to advocate taking a stand, at any cost, with Great Britain.

It also stipulated that 'each of the High Contracting Parties undertakes not to adopt in foreign countries an attitude which is inconsistent with the alliance or might create difficulties for the other party thereto'. The Rashid Ali Government maintained that its attitude was neutral and that there was nothing in its conduct inconsistent with the treaty. The British Embassy complained that the Italian Legation in Baghdad had become the rallying point for Axis supporters and sympathizers in Iraq. The weakness in Rashid Ali's argument was that Iraq, even as a neutral State, was not bound to tolerate the diplomatic representative of a foreign Power who abused his position. If such an action were not a sufficient cause for breaking off diplomatic relations with Italy, it certainly was a violation of diplomatic 'propriety', and the Iraqi Government, short of demanding recall of the Minister, should have registered a protest in the matter.

#### SECRET NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE AXIS POWERS

The controversy over the rupture of diplomatic relations with Italy was not confined to Rashid Ali's ministers. The Mufti of Jerusalem and his pan-Arab circle, while they advocated strict neutrality so long as the issue of the war was uncertain, advised the minimum fulfilment of Iraq's treaty obligations, provided that this would not arouse undue Axis suspicion. The dominant group in the army, who always had a say in the politics of the country, also opposed further commitments with Britain and advocated neutrality. To resolve the issue Nuri suggested that the matter be referred to the High Defence Council before it was taken up for formal action by the Council of Ministers on 12 June 1940. The Council, reviewing the international situation at a time when British prestige was at its lowest ebb, was not in favour of antagonizing the Axis Powers so long as the attitudes of Russia and Japan were still unknown. The majority of the military were in favour of neutrality and recommended the sounding of the opinion of Turkey as an ally of Britain (in her treaty of 1939) and of Iraq by virtue of the Sa'dabad Pact.<sup>1</sup>

The position in Syria, resulting from the capitulation of France, had become another issue between the Iraqi Government and Britain. General Taha al-Hashimi and the leading Syrian *émigrés* advocated a revolt in Syria. The British Government advised against antagonizing

<sup>1</sup> Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, pp. 141-2.

France. The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Palestinian leaders were in the meantime anxious to revive the rebellion in Palestine. The prevailing opinion was that the attitude of Turkey should be known before any move (in Syria in particular) was made.

On 19 June it was officially announced that the Iraqi Government had decided to send General Nuri and Naji Shawkat to Ankara on an official mission, in order to 'seek consultations with Turkey on the present momentous issues, since both countries are signatories of the Sa'dabad Pact'. Turkey was also to be sounded as to her attitude regarding Syria should the Syrian nationalists raise a rebellion and declare the independence of their country. The Iraqi delegation arrived in Ankara on 24 June and consultations with Sarajoglu, the Turkish Foreign Minister, lasted a week, dealing with the attitude of the two neighbouring countries towards Britain and Germany following the fall of France. Turkey had officially declared non-belligerency on the same day as Italy entered the war, and Iraq, it seems, was advised to assume a similar attitude.<sup>1</sup>

The Iraqi delegation was composed of two members at cross-purposes. General Nuri, whose views on Anglo-Iraqi co-operation were well known, sought support for his policy.<sup>2</sup> Naji Shawkat, on the other hand, was entrusted with confidential instructions (which were perhaps the primary motive for his mission) to contact von Papen, Germany's Minister to Turkey, in order to sound him on the possibility of future collaboration between the Arabs and the Axis Powers. Shawkat was supplied with a letter of introduction signed by the Mufti, which Rashid Ali, it seems, had not seen; but Rashid Ali had undoubtedly been informed of Shawkat's intention to contact von Papen, of which he was officially notified by cable when Shawkat's visit to von Papen had finally been arranged.<sup>3</sup> Shawkat's mission was fulfilled after Nuri's departure from Turkey when he went to Istanbul, for 'medical reasons' as it was then announced,<sup>4</sup> to see the German Minister. The text of the Mufti's letter of introduction to von Papen follows:

<sup>1</sup> Nuri summed up the situation thus in an interview with the writer. He added that Naji Shawkat, after his return from Turkey, submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet which embodied in detail Turkey's attitude and advice to Iraq. The writer, however, has not been able to see the memorandum.

<sup>2</sup> On the way back from Turkey Nuri visited Syria and Egypt and tried to enlist support for his policy in the other Arab countries.

<sup>3</sup> The writer's interview with Rashid Ali and Naji Shawkat.

<sup>4</sup> *Iraq Times*, 1 July 1940. Nuri confirmed to the writer the medical reason and said that Naji Shawkat told him that he was suffering from ear-ache.

Baghdad, June 21, 1940.

Excellency:

I have the honor to present to Your Excellency my friend Naji Bey Shawkat, Minister of Justice of the Kingdom of Iraq, who is leaving for Ankara today. I assure Your Excellency that Naji Bey is the person in whom you can place complete confidence in discussing the general questions concerning the Arab countries. It is a great occasion for me to be able to enter into relations with your Government through the good offices of Your Excellency, for ever since the beginning of the present war, the difficult circumstances in which I found myself in Syria, with regard to the French, and in Iraq, to the British, made such relations impossible. I therefore take the opportunity provided by the departure of my friend Naji Bey, to write to Your Excellency asking you to convey to His Excellency the Great Chief and Leader my sincerest felicitations on the occasion of the great political and military triumphs which he has just achieved through his foresight and great genius. I beg Your Excellency to convey to him my regards and compliments, together with my best wishes for the undertaking entered upon to create a new order. I must also express to him my thanks for the interest and attention which he has never ceased in the past 4 years to give to the Arab question in general, and Palestine in particular. The Arab nation everywhere feels the greatest joy and deepest gratification on the occasion of these great successes.

Palestine, which has for the past four years been fighting the democracies and international Jewry, is ready at any time to assume an active role and redouble her efforts both at home and in the other Arab countries. The Arab people, slandered, maltreated, and deceived by our common enemies, confidently expect that the result of your final victory will be their independence and complete liberation, as well as the creation of their unity, when they will be linked to your country by a treaty of friendship and collaboration.

I beg Your Excellency to discuss with my friend Naji Bey in detail the Arab question and the future of Palestine and of Syria, as well as the program which your Government may deem advisable to lay the foundations for bringing the collaboration between our two peoples.

I beg Your Excellency to believe the most brotherly sentiments of the Arab people toward your great and valiant people, and present to you, Excellency, my best greetings.<sup>1</sup>

The meeting between Naji Shawkat and von Papen, arranged by Zoltán de Máriássy, Hungarian Minister to Turkey, took place on 5 July 1940.<sup>2</sup> Shawkat opened his conversation by explaining that he

<sup>1</sup> For the text (original in French) see U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, Series D (later referred to as *DGFP*), x, 143-4.

<sup>2</sup> At the outset von Papen suggested that Naji Shawkat should rather see the Italian Ambassador; Shawkat, however, declined and von Papen thought that he 'might receive some useful information' from the Iraqi minister.



represented in the present Iraqi Cabinet the opinion of the Iraqi people who aspired to achieve freedom and independence from England. He regretted that it had not yet been possible to drop General Nuri, who was known to be an anglophile, from the Cabinet for fear of British reprisals. Shawkat then went on to explain why Iraq had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany (the responsibility for which he must have put on Nuri) and pointed out that 'the fact that the Cabinet refused to sever relations with Italy, as demanded by the English Ambassador, despite the support he received from Nuri as-Sa'id, should be considered as a positive achievement of the nationalistic trend of the present Cabinet'.<sup>1</sup>

Von Papen pointed out that the future development of the political situation in the Middle East was a matter of interest primarily to Italy; he therefore could be regarded only as an intermediary for proposals addressed to Italy via the German Government. Shawkat replied that since 'the Arab national movement had fought Anglo-French imperialism, so it would have to oppose Italian imperialism'. 'It was therefore', Shawkat added, 'to the interest of the Axis Powers for Germany to use her influence with Italy, in order to support a solution that would be compatible with the interests of the Arab movement.'

I told the Minister of Justice [von Papen reported] that all peoples fighting for their freedom naturally had to make a contribution themselves. We had a right to expect that now, when we were about to enter the final phase of the contest with England, the people's government of Iraq would also do everything militarily possible to support the fight.

While Shawkat expressed himself cautiously on this point, he intimated that Germany would undoubtedly receive the support of Iraq against Britain when the time came. In this connexion von Papen suggested that his Government should make use of Herr Steffen, the representative of Rheinmetall,<sup>2</sup> whom he pointed out had good connexions with the Iraqi General Staff. Shawkat, who wanted a statement of sympathy with Arab national aspirations, recommended the immediate establishment of a national Government in Damascus and stated that this measure was strongly endorsed by the Mufti. Von Papen reported that the Arab national Government would resume its struggle in Palestine and that that should be of particular value to Germany 'at a moment when the most diverse interests were clashing

<sup>1</sup> *DGFP*, x, 142.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 173 above.

in Syria'. The prerequisite, however, was that Germany should 'relieve their [Arab] anxiety over a possible Italian imperialism'.<sup>1</sup>

(While Naji Shawkat was conducting his confidential conversations with von Papen, Rashid Ali, in agreement with the Mufti and the Four Colonels, approached Luigi Gabrielli, the Italian Minister in Baghdad, with the object of securing a statement of sympathy with Arab national aspirations from the Italian Government. Having received Count Ciano's approval, Gabrielli—upon Rashid's request—issued a written statement embodying Italy's sympathy with Arab national aspirations although Ciano's vague instructions were to the effect that only a verbal statement was to be made. The text of Gabrielli's letter follows:

Baghdad, 7 July 1940.

Dear Excellency:

H.E. Count Ciano, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, has instructed me to inform your Excellency that, in accordance with the policy so far followed, Italy aims at ensuring the complete independence and the territorial integrity of Syria and Lebanon as well as Iraq and the countries under British mandate.

In consequence, Italy will oppose any eventual British or Turkish pretensions to territorial occupation whether in Syria, Lebanon or in Iraq.

Believe me dear Excellency, &c. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile Rashid Ali and the Mufti were in constant touch with the Four Colonels and often asked the question: 'How long can the Iraqi army hold out should an armed conflict develop between Iraq and Britain?' The reply of the Four, it seems, was not very encouraging, which prompted Rashid Ali to approach the Italian (August 1940) and the Japanese Legations (October 1940) requesting arms deliveries.<sup>3</sup> The war, however, made it exceedingly difficult for either Italy or Japan to meet Iraq's military requirements, which discouraged Rashid Ali from an early armed conflict with Britain.

News as to what was going on behind the scenes reached General Nuri and his followers, and rumours were circulated that the Rashid Ali Government was contemplating improving its relations with the Axis Powers. Nuri, himself perhaps worried as to the future of Iraq should the Axis Powers win the war, wished to find out what promises Rashid Ali and the Mufti had obtained from the Axis Powers. He

<sup>1</sup> Von Papen to German Foreign Office, 6 July 1940 (see *DGFP*, x, 141-3).

<sup>2</sup> See Haddad, *Memoirs*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 139-40. Sabbagh fails to give the dates of these conversations, since he wrote his memoirs in exile without consulting official records.

approached a few of the Mufti's close associates and offered to work with them, if the Iraqi Government could obtain assurances of independence from the Axis Powers. This offer, which was warmly supported by some of the Mufti's advisers, was rejected by the Mufti owing to Nuri's intimate relationship with the British. The offer, the Mufti contended, was merely designed to find out what the Mufti's plan was in order to pass it on to the British authorities. Despite this discouragement Nuri approached Gabrielli, the Italian Minister, who thought that Nuri's collaboration might be used to Italy's advantage. When, however, the news of Nuri's secret contact with Gabrielli reached von Papen in September 1940 through the Italian Colonial Secretary, he at once warned his Government against treating with Nuri. He explained that Italian collaboration with Nuri would be very disappointing to the nationalists, who regarded Nuri as a 'traitor', and pointed out that such dealings could not be kept secret for very long. Thus Nuri's flirtations with the Axis, prompted by his curiosity to find out what his pan-Arab adversaries had secured no less than by his own personal anxieties as to the future of Iraq, were short-lived. What he might have learned perhaps indicated that Iraq could gain no more from the Axis Powers than what he had already obtained from Britain. Moreover, England's ability to carry on the fight alone before Russia entered the war on her side<sup>1</sup> convinced Nuri of ultimate victory and encouraged him to oppose Rashid Ali and his supporters.

Encouraged by von Papen's favourable attitude, Rashid Ali and the Mufti proceeded to negotiate directly with the German Government. They decided to send 'Uthman Kamal Haddad, the Mufti's private secretary, to Berlin via Turkey. Haddad was given a letter of introduction to von Papen in which von Papen was requested to facilitate his journey to Berlin.<sup>2</sup>

Haddad, travelling from Iraq under the alias 'Tawfiq Ali Shakir', arrived in Ankara during the first week of August 1940. He met von Papen on 6 August, and told him (after he had given him the Mufti's letter of introduction) that the Italian Government had issued a written promise that all Arab countries under mandate or protectorate had Italy's positive assurance of their independence. He also told him that Iraq would like to restore relations with Germany on the

<sup>1</sup> Nuri often pointed out to the Four Colonels that Russia's non-aggression pact with Germany was 'unnatural' and that eventually she would enter the war against Germany. See Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> DGFP, x. 275.

same basis, and wished to assist the Axis Powers in their war against Britain, especially by raising a revolt in Palestine. The tension between Iraq and Britain, he added, was increasing and the Iraqi army was master of the situation. 'An understanding has been reached', he concluded, 'with Saudi Arabia on the establishment of independence, the removal of Abdullah, and annexation of Transjordan to Palestine.'<sup>1</sup>

Haddad, travelling now under the name 'Max Müller', proceeded to Germany via Budapest and arrived in Berlin on 26 August. He saw Grobba the same day, and, on the basis of instructions from Rashid Ali and the Mufti, told him that the rupture of relations between Iraq and Germany was condemned by the majority of the people and the leading politicians. Haddad also stated that an 'Arab Committee' under the presidency of the Mufti had already been formed in Baghdad, composed of Iraqi, Syrian, and Palestinian leaders. This committee decided to establish contact with Germany. Haddad and Grobba discussed in detail the specific points raised by the Arab Committee, which touched on almost all Arab problems. Formulated as specific wishes of the Arab Committee, Grobba submitted them in the form of a memorandum to the Foreign Office, dated 27 August, as the basis for an Arab-German agreement. These wishes were as follows:

1. A joint declaration, or identical declarations of the German and Italian Governments, formulated roughly as in the annex. The inclusion of Syria is justified by the fact that this state owed its existence to the now defunct League of Nations, and that a revision of the status of Syria was therefore in order.

2. A declaration of the two Governments, in writing, that they are in accord with

(a) the expressed wish of the Iraq Government to restore diplomatic relations with Germany, with a view to establish friendly collaboration between the two Governments in all questions of interest to both countries;

(b) The willingness of the Iraq Government to accord to Germany and Italy a preferred position with respect to the exploitation of Iraq mineral resources, especially petroleum, and the economic development of the country, with the understanding that the interests of each side in this regard are equally safeguarded;

(c) The willingness of the Iraq Government to offer its good offices to enable Germany and Italy to achieve a like understanding with the other Arab countries, especially Syria, Palestine, Transjordan, and Saudi Arabia.

After the official German-Italian declaration regarding 1 is made and

<sup>1</sup> Von Papen to German Foreign Office, 6 Aug. 1950 (*ibid.*, pp. 415-16).



the latter regarding 2 received, the Iraq Government will dismiss Nuri Said as Foreign Minister and replace him probably with Naji Shawkat.

The Iraq Government then proposes the conclusion of a secret agreement between it and the German and Italian Governments, in which would be laid down all the details of the friendly collaboration envisioned. The negotiations should be conducted in Ankara.

The Iraq Government proposes furthermore that Iraq and countries declared independent (Syria, Palestine, and Transjordan) should declare their strict neutrality.

After that it is intended to start a general uprising in Transjordan and Palestine. Up to 10,000 men and the required number of officers will be made available. The preparations would have to be organized from Syria. Arms (rifles, machine guns, anti-aircraft, and ammunition) would have to be supplied to the committee by Italy from the stocks of the French Army in Syria, which are to be surrendered to Italy in accordance with the French-Italian armistice agreement; if necessary, this could be arranged against payment. Financing of the uprising, especially in the early months, will require 30,000 pounds sterling, gold, of which one-third can be raised by the committee, while the rest would have to be supplied by Germany or Italy. There are still 30,000 to 40,000 English troops in Palestine, which the Arabs believe they can handle.

Tying down these troops in Palestine and preventing the shipment of Anglo-Indian troops from India, Bahrein, or Aden to Egypt will substantially relieve Italy's military situation in the eastern Mediterranean.

If England should interpret preventing the transit of Anglo-Indian troops or sending a German Minister to Baghdad as a provocation and reply by the use of force, Iraq is prepared to defend her neutrality against England with all means. The Iraq Government is prepared to admit to its country all German agents or experts necessary for the purpose. It would perhaps be expedient for the time being if they came on neutral passports.

#### ANNEX

##### *Joint or Identical Declaration of the German and Italian Governments*

#### I

(The German and the Italian Governments recognize the full independence of the Arab countries which are already independent or are under French mandate (Syria and Lebanon) or under British mandate and protectorate (Transjordan, Palestine, the Arab countries on the coasts of the Arabian Peninsula—Kuwait, Oman, Masgat, Hadhramaut, South Yemen as part of the state of Yemen, and the other countries recognized as Arab countries on the basis of an Arab majority of the population).)

Germany and Italy will make no use of any juridical or other means designed to abridge the independence of these Arab countries, e.g., by

establishing mandates, the hypocritical device of the League of Nations and the democracies to disguise their imperialistic greed.

#### II

Germany and Italy recognize the right of all Arab countries to shape their national unity in accordance with their wishes. Germany and Italy will place no obstacles to the achievement of that unity or the enjoyment of full independence by these countries.

#### III

Germany and Italy recognize the right of the Arab countries to solve the question of the Jewish elements in Palestine and the other Arab countries in a manner that conforms to the national and ethnic interests of the Arabs, and to the solution of the Jewish question in the countries of Germany and Italy.

#### IV

Germany and Italy have no imperialistic designs with respect to Egypt and the Sudan, and recognize the independence of these two countries, as set forth under number I of this Declaration.

#### V

Germany and Italy have no greater wish than to see each Arab nation enjoying abundant prosperity and taking its historical and natural place in the sun, both for the welfare of all mankind and for the purpose of economic cooperation with these countries in the mutual interest.<sup>1</sup>

Haddad does not report in his memoirs certain specific points which Grobba included in his memorandum, such as 'the Iraqi Government will dismiss Nuri Sa'id', that the proposed uprising would start in Palestine, and that the Iraqi Government would admit German agents or experts. On the other hand Haddad reported that 'the language of the Axis Powers shall have a privileged position in Iraq over other foreign languages', which was not included in Grobba's memorandum. The latter point was perhaps taken for granted by Grobba if agreement between the Arabs and the Axis Powers was reached, but the other points seem to have been included at Grobba's suggestion.<sup>2</sup>

Haddad conducted further conversations with a number of the

<sup>1</sup> DGFP, x, 558-60.

<sup>2</sup> Haddad, *Memoirs*, pp. 33-34. In his interview with Grobba, the present writer raised the question as to why Grobba's memorandum differed from the version Haddad gave in his memoirs. Grobba replied that he had written his memorandum immediately after his conversation with Haddad, while the latter wrote his memoirs after the war.

German Foreign Office high officials in which he reiterated Arab aspirations and stressed in particular the necessity of establishing independent Arab Governments in Syria and Palestine and releasing interned Arab leaders in those countries.<sup>1</sup>

On 20 September Haddad was informed by the German Foreign Office that although the German Government was agreeable to the idea of a formal declaration of sympathies with national aspirations, the Iraq Government should first obtain the approval of the Italian Government. Haddad replied that the Iraqi Government had already obtained a written assurance from the Italian Government. Ribbentrop did not at first take Haddad's statement seriously, but when von Papen reiterated this statement to the German Foreign Office they were bound to take it seriously. Shawkat had again been in Turkey, visiting von Papen on 10 September, and told him about the Italian assurance.

The German Foreign Office sent a note to the Italian Government inquiring about the matter. Ciano at first denied that such a written document had ever been issued; but upon inquiry from Gabrielli, who admitted it had been issued, Ciano informed the German Foreign Office that a written promise had actually been given. Haddad was informed on 26 September that the Italian Government had received the text of the Gabrielli letter, but that certain objections had been raised concerning the establishment of Arab Governments in Syria and Lebanon in view of the desire of the Axis Powers not to antagonize France. Thus Haddad did not press this matter.<sup>2</sup> In about the middle of October he was informed that at last the German and Italian Governments had agreed on the text of the declaration, but he found that the statement referring to the independence of the Arab countries was missing. He pressed in vain for the insertion of such a statement, but only the German Government met his request that the declaration should be issued.<sup>3</sup> The declaration, dated 18

<sup>1</sup> Haddad, *Memoirs*, pp. 37-40.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> For text in Italian see Ettore Rossi, *Documenti sull' Origini e gli Sviluppi della Questione Araba, 1875-1944* (Rome, 1944), p. 225. The German version of the declaration is as follows: 'Germany, which has been always animated by feelings of friendship for the Arabs and desires to see them prosper, gain happiness and to see them occupy among the peoples of the world a place corresponding to their natural and historic importance has always watched with interest their struggle to achieve their independence. The Arab countries in their striving to achieve this goal can continue to count on the full sympathy of Germany. In making this declaration Germany is in full agreement with its Italian ally.' For text in Arabic see *al-Istiqlal*, 24 Oct. 1940.

October 1940, was sent to von Papen in Ankara and was communicated to the Iraqi Government. It was simultaneously broadcast in Arabic from Rome and Berlin on 23 October. Although the substance of the German and Italian texts is in essence the same, the wording is not identical. The text of the Italian version follows:

Great Britain watches with much preoccupation the increasing sympathies of the Arab countries with the Axis Powers, whom [the Arabs] await [as their] liberators from British domination. [Britain] is endeavoring to oppose this movement of sympathy [to the Axis] and is trying to show that the aim of Italy and Germany is [merely] to occupy and dominate the Arab countries.

The Italian Government, in order to counteract this malicious propaganda and appease the Arabs regarding Italy's political [aims], confirms what has already been broadcast in Arabic that [Italy] has always been animated with the same sentiment of friendship towards the Arabs. [Italy] desires to see the [Arab countries] prosper and occupy among [other] peoples of the world a place corresponding to their natural and historical importance. Italy has always watched with interest the struggle [of the Arabs] to achieve their independence and, in striving for this end, they can depend upon the full sympathy of Italy in future.

Italy makes this declaration in full agreement with Germany.

This declaration, which was repeated time and again from both the Berlin and Rome radio stations, aroused great interest among the Arabs. *al-Istiqlal*, though critical of British policy, was cautious in its comments; but it tacitly welcomed the declaration and reproached Britain for not fulfilling her promises to the Arabs. *al-Alam al-'Arabi* was more cautious, but *al-Bilad* and other papers were very enthusiastic. Perhaps only *al-'Iraq* was critical, which antagonized the pan-Arabs. Two representative examples may be quoted as follows:

*al-Bilad*: This is decisive proof that the great cause for which the Arabs are struggling is a lawful one, and the Arabic-speaking world therefore has every reason to proclaim its demands and endeavour to realize them. The ideal which the Arabs are struggling to attain is a lawful one, felt by conscientious nations who know the meaning of freedom and appreciate the value of national pride. . . . The hearts of the Arabs are gladdened whenever a voice is raised in appreciation of their cause and in support of their struggle for an independent life, though they know full well that the right to existence in the present age is possessed by energetic, powerful and self-reliant nations, and in proportion to the sacrifices offered by their citizens on the altar of national defence.

*al-'Iraq*: [Observe] Hitler's frustrated efforts to invade England, the dilemma in which he now finds himself, and his attempts to win other



powers over to help him in his war against Britain by dragging weary, exhausted Spain and broken-winged France into the conflict; his propaganda machine inspired to allure the Arabs with expressions of sympathy with their struggle for independence, in the belief that they are so innocent as to be deceived by means of futile propaganda poured in abundance from the Berlin broadcasting station.

Finding themselves up a blind alley, the Axis Powers believe that they will find in the Arab States a fertile field for sowing their intrigues and deriving from them the help they are now trying to receive from Laval and General Franco, to save themselves from the failure they have experienced through Britain's heroic resistance.

The Axis Powers' attempt to bring Spain and France into the conflict have failed. The Arabs have derided the Berlin and Rome declarations of sympathy with their struggle for independence. The Arabs have witnessed wonders in the fate of certain European states, who after their ears were filled with pledges and promises fell easy prey to Germany. Rumania . . . a striking example for the Arabs. How could the Berlin and Rome [broadcasting] stations expect the Arabs to believe a declaration intended for deceit and allurement, at a time when Germany and Italy are seeking help in all quarters, the spectre of defeat clearly stalking before their eyes?

Soon afterwards rumours were circulated that the Rashid Ali Government was contemplating the reopening of diplomatic relations with Germany in response either to a request made by Germany through the Italian Minister in Baghdad or to a proposal made by one of the local papers. The comments of the Iraqi press, encouraged by the pan-Arab leaders, became increasingly hostile towards Great Britain.<sup>1</sup>

From Berlin Haddad went to Rome (23 October) where he discussed Italian-Arab relations with Signor Buti, Chief of Political Department, but no definite commitments were made. On his way back to Baghdad he took to the Mufti a letter from von Ribbentrop in which (in addition to the ideas embodied in the German declaration) the Arab Committee in Baghdad was warned against an armed conflict with Britain; but von Ribbentrop added that if the Iraqi Government should be involved in war with Britain the German Government would do everything it could to help Iraq.

The Italian set-back in Greece did not alarm the pan-Arabs, since they always felt uneasy about Italy's political ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean; indeed some of them were gratified and urged that further conversations with Germany should be held.

<sup>1</sup> See [Siddiq Shanshal], 'The Attitude of Iraq towards the International Situation', *al-Bilad*, 19 Dec. 1940.

They were also anxious to contact Russia, not only to establish diplomatic relations with her but also to secure a similar promise of sympathy with Arab national aspirations. Thus it was decided to send Haddad again to Berlin to sound Germany about establishing relations with Russia, and to ask for help in supplying arms. If such help were given, Iraq would invade Palestine and drive out the British garrison.

Haddad left Baghdad on 22 January 1941 and arrived in Ankara on 25 January. He reached Berlin via Rome on 12 February, armed with a letter from the Mufti to the Führer (dated 20 January) in which he stated Arab national aspirations and Rashid Ali's willingness to fight Britain if Germany would recognize the independence of Iraq and the other Arab countries.<sup>1</sup>

Hitler instructed von Weizsäcker to send a letter to the Mufti on 3 April stating that the German Government would be willing to recognize the independence of Iraq and the other Arab countries when they had won it in fighting. But it was requested that this exchange of letters should be kept secret.<sup>2</sup> Further, Haddad reported that the German Foreign Office was not in favour of Iraq opening diplomatic relations with Russia. When Russia, however, was approached by Iraq she refused to give a promise of independence to the Arab countries as a condition for opening relations.

While these negotiations were going on, Rashid Ali's position had become uncertain, and he was neither able to fulfil the promises given to the Germans nor did he receive the arms needed to fight against Britain. He was forced to resign in January 1941, and his negotiations with Germany were not resumed until his return to power in April of that year.

#### ITALO-GERMAN UNDERSTANDING ON IRAQ AND THE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES

While negotiations were going on between the pan-Arab leaders and the Axis Powers concerning the independence of Iraq and the other Arab countries, Italy and Germany were in the meantime carrying on negotiations for dividing the Arab world into spheres of influence.

<sup>1</sup> Since this letter has not yet been published, and since it was the only document addressed to Hitler in which the Mufti stated pan-Arab aspirations, it is quoted in full in Appendix IV, p. 378 below.

<sup>2</sup> See text of von Weizsäcker's letter in Haddad, *Memoirs*, pp. 106-8.

In a conversation between Hitler and Ciano in Berlin on 7 July 1940 Hitler, in a broad statement, recognized that 'the Mediterranean and the Adriatic had from olden times belonged to the historic sphere of interest of the Italian peninsula'.<sup>1</sup> (In more specific terms Italy aspired to inherit France's position in North Africa, to extend her Libyan territory to Lake Chad in the south and connect it with a wide portion of the Sudan to Ethiopia, and to enlarge Italian Somaliland by absorbing French and British Somaliland. She intended to conclude bilateral treaties with Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Iraq by which Italian influence in those areas and Italian interest in their raw materials, particularly cotton and oil, would be secured.) The German Government had already recognized, since mid-June 1940, that the Arab world was an area of priority of Italian interests; but Germany reserved her rights in the economic interests in that area.

In a circular of the German Foreign Office to its representatives in certain leading countries dated 20 August, the broad outline of the Italo-German understanding on the Arab countries was stated as follows:

Leading Arab personalities have in recent times repeatedly approached our foreign Missions with the request to bring about a policy statement by the Reich Government on the independence movement of the Arab countries and to promote support for their aspirations. This affords occasion to state the following fundamental considerations about the coming reorganization of the Arab region:

Germany pursues no political interests in the Mediterranean area, whose southern and eastern part is formed by the Arab world. Germany will therefore let Italy take the lead in the political reorganization of the Arab area. This consequently rules out any German claim to political leadership, or the sharing of leadership with Italy in the Arab territories, which consist of the Arabian peninsula, Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan, Syria-Lebanon, and Iraq.

This political *désintéressement*, however, does not at all mean that in these areas Germany renounces the pursuit of interests in matters of economy, transportation, and cultural policy. First and foremost, Germany will assert and settle, in concert with Italy, her claims with respect to participation in the exploitation of oil resources, the securing of her air routes, and the continuation of her archaeological activities.<sup>2</sup>

(A similar understanding was also reached with the Soviet Union.) In the conversations between Germany and the Soviet Union in

<sup>1</sup> *DGFP*, x, 154-5.

<sup>2</sup> The Foreign Office added that this circular 'must be treated confidentially', and that it 'must not be known to Arab personalities' (*ibid.*, pp. 515-16).

November 1940 the Arab world was recognized as an Italian sphere of influence, but the Soviet sphere in the Middle East was not clearly defined. In a conversation with Molotov on 12-13 November 1940, Hitler declared that Germany had no interests in Asia other than general economic and commercial ones. He pointed out that Italy wanted the Mediterranean and Germany was striving toward the Ocean. Ribbentrop told Molotov on the same day that the Soviet Union's sphere 'would presumably be centered south of the territory of the Soviet Union in the direction of the Indian Ocean'. On 26 November Molotov specifically demanded that 'the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf [should be] recognized as the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union'.<sup>1</sup>

The Soviet Union had already recognized, in a conversation between Molotov and Rosso, Italian Ambassador to Russia, on 20 June 1940, that 'in the Mediterranean, the Soviet Government would recognize Italy's hegemony, provided that Italy would recognize the Soviet Government's hegemony in the Black Sea'.<sup>2</sup> On 25 June Molotov reiterated this affirmation to Rosso and regarded as 'perfectly reasonable' Italy's preponderant position in the Mediterranean.

While Germany was prepared to recognize the establishment of an Arab State (presumably comprising the Fertile Crescent) under the leadership of Iraq, Italy was not prepared to concede so much to the Arabs. To satisfy Italian ambition Germany, despite the pledges given to the Mufti and Rashid Ali, was willing to put the contemplated Arab Union under some sort of 'protection' by the Axis Powers, with a preponderant position for Italy.<sup>3</sup>

The Arab leaders, though not unaware of the Italo-German arrangements,<sup>4</sup> did not fully grasp the way in which the Axis Powers were proceeding to divide the French and British Empires among themselves. While they were aware of Italy's attitude towards the

<sup>1</sup> For texts of the conversations between Molotov and Hitler, and Molotov and Ribbentrop see R. J. Sontag and J. S. Beddie, eds., *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941* (Washington, 1948), pp. 217-59.

<sup>2</sup> Schulenburg to German Foreign Office, 26 June 1940 (*DGFP*, x, 23). For text of Molotov's memorandum given to Rosso on this meeting and Rosso's account of the meeting see Mario Toscano, *Una mancata intesa italo-sovietica nel 1940 e 1941* (Florence, 1955), pp. 41-43.

<sup>3</sup> See the comments of Woermann, director of the political department of the German Foreign Office, endorsed by the State Secretary von Weizsäcker, on a memorandum on the situation in the Mediterranean (*DGFP*, x, 261-2).

<sup>4</sup> Von Papen had intimated this understanding to Naji Shawkat in their conversation on 5 July 1940. See p. 180 above.



Arabs, as shown in her treatment of the Arabs of Libya, they counted on Germany's goodwill to reduce Italian ambition in Arab lands, and were delighted by the subsequent Italian set-backs in the Mediterranean, hoping that eventual German victory would ensure the promises given for the independence of the Arab countries.<sup>1</sup> The shortsightedness of the pan-Arab leaders was reflected in trusting themselves to Powers that had just embarked on a new adventure of empire-building, and in their lack of faith in the democracies, whose empires were already on the move towards emancipation. It is true that Palestine and Syria-Lebanon were still under British and French control, but it was evident that such control was receding and that Iraq, who had already won her independence, would suffer a certain loss of independence if she sided with the Axis Powers. The Mufti and the Syrian leaders were perhaps too anxious to be restored to positions of power in their countries, and the Iraqi leaders cherished the idea that their country might become the Prussia of the Arab Union.<sup>2</sup>

#### EXTERNAL PRESSURE ON RASHID 'ALI'S GOVERNMENT

General Nuri, who was still on good personal terms with the Four Colonels, tried to influence Rashid Ali through the army. He often invited the Four, together with General Taha, to informal gatherings at his house, and discussed with them the advantages of breaking off diplomatic relations with Italy. At one of these meetings Nuri suggested that the time had come to enter the war and dispatch an expeditionary force (composed of two divisions) which might participate in the liberation of Libya from Italian rule. He intimated to Colonel Salah ad-Din as-Sabbagh that he might be entrusted with the command of that force. Nuri thought that he might thus gain the support of Sabbagh and the Four Colonels for his policy.

At Nuri's suggestion General Taha, Minister of Defence, called a meeting of the High Defence Council.<sup>3</sup> The meeting was attended by Rashid Ali, Nuri, Taha al-Hashimi, Naji as-Suwaydi, 'Umar Nazmi, and a number of leading officers. Nuri presented two proposals for

<sup>1</sup> See Haddad, *Memoirs*, pp. 46-47, 80.

<sup>2</sup> The Nazis seem to have been determined to support Iraq, as the leading Arab State, against Great Britain and to let her play her part in the Arab nationalist movement. Among the proposals offered by Hess for an understanding between England and Germany was England's 'evacuation of Iraq' (J. R. Rees, *The Case of Rudolf Hess* (London, 1947), p. 42).

<sup>3</sup> The writer has not been able to ascertain the date of this meeting; it may, however, have been either in July or August 1940.

discussion: (1) the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Italy; (2) permission for Britain to land forces in Iraq. While General Taha and 'Umar Nazmi kept silent during the discussion, Nuri's proposals were violently opposed by Rashid Ali and Naji as-Suwaydi on the grounds that Iraq was neither obliged under her treaty with Britain to sever relations with Italy nor was there any need for Britain to land forces, which were permitted to land only if Iraq were in danger of an attack, and Rashid Ali and his supporters were of the opinion that there was no such danger. Seeking the support of the army officers,<sup>1</sup> Nuri suggested that their opinion should be expressed on his proposals. The Council accordingly decided to ask the General Staff to submit a memorandum on the matter.

On the following day Nuri invited the Four Colonels to a meeting at his house and repeated to Sabbagh the offer that he should command the Iraqi expeditionary force that might be sent abroad. The Four, however, already committed to support Rashid Ali and the Mufti without Nuri's knowledge, were embarrassed and replied that it would be in the interests of all if Nuri could come to an understanding with his colleagues, since any disagreement among the members of the Government would be harmful to the country.<sup>2</sup>

At the following meeting of the High Defence Council the General Staff's memorandum, prepared by Colonel Sabbagh, was submitted. Sabbagh, throwing off the mask, candidly stated where his sympathies lay and argued that Iraq was subject to no immediate external threat which would require the landing of British forces. Relations between Nuri and Rashid Ali had already become strained, and there was an exchange of sharp verbal recriminations between them. While Sabbagh's memorandum was still being discussed, Nuri scribbled a note to General Taha suggesting that he should end what appeared to him a futile discussion. Taha declared the meeting adjourned, never again to be recalled until April 1941, when Rashid Ali returned to power after his fall in January. Nuri and Sabbagh, separated for ever, never exchanged another word; Nuri perhaps saw him again on the scaffold five years later.

In the circumstances Sir Basil Newton was instructed by his Government to make representations to the Rashid Ali Government. He first addressed complaints to General Nuri, the Foreign Minister,

<sup>1</sup> Amin Zaki, Acting Chief of the General Staff, and Colonel Salah al-Din as-Sabbagh, officer commanding the Third Division, were present at the meeting.

<sup>2</sup> Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, p. 146.

but these had little effect. With regard to Rashid Ali's move to open diplomatic relations with Germany, Newton called in person at the Iraqi Foreign Office. (If the Iraqi Government were to resume its relations with Germany, he said, England would reconsider her relations with Iraq.) This warning was discussed by the Rashid Ali Cabinet on 27 November 1940, and the Iraqi Foreign Minister was instructed to reply to the Ambassador that the Iraqi Government had no knowledge of the desire of the German Government to resume diplomatic relations with Iraq. When this reply was communicated to the British Ambassador, the latter remarked that His Majesty's Government had no confidence in the Prime Minister of Iraq, and that Iraq had to choose between her friendship with Britain and her Prime Minister.<sup>1</sup>

This statement naturally aroused the indignation of Rashid Ali, who immediately instructed the Iraqi Foreign Office to ask for confirmation from the British Foreign Office. The Iraqi chargé d'affaires had an audience with Lord Halifax on 29 November, and communicated to him the reactions of the Rashid Ali Government to Newton's statement. Lord Halifax remarked that, in the light of certain actions inconsistent with the Treaty of Alliance, Britain was forced to take such a stand. The substance of that interview was subsequently communicated to the British Ambassador in Baghdad, who in turn communicated it to the Iraqi Foreign Minister on 4 December, and to the Regent on 5 December. It was reiterated that Britain 'could not conceal from the Iraqi Government that we [the British Government] have not received from the Prime Minister the degree of co-operation to which we felt entitled under the treaty'. As to the protest made by the Iraqi Government against England's interference in the internal affairs of Iraq, the Foreign Secretary said: 'We had no desire to interfere in internal affairs nor to do anything inconsistent with the dignity of the Iraqi State.' But with regard to the statement that Iraq had to choose between Britain's friendship and Rashid Ali, Lord Halifax replied: 'I fully recognize the gravity of this step, but I have no doubt at all that the continuance of the present state of affairs is not conducive to the maintenance of good relations which we all desire. . . .'

In the meantime pressure was put on Rashid Ali by the Government of the United States, probably at the instance of Britain, in

<sup>1</sup> See a statement to this effect by Naji as-Suwaydi in the Senate on 27 Feb. 1941 (*Proc. Senate*, 15th Sess., 1940-1, p. 78).

order to induce him to abide by Iraq's treaty obligations. On 5 December Paul Knabenshue, the American Minister, had an audience with Rashid Ali in the presence of General Nuri, in which he delivered a note, which was the first of its kind in the history of American-Iraqi relations.<sup>1</sup> In that note 'America's keen interest in the welfare of Iraq' and 'anxiety' lest Iraq should lose her independence were emphasized. The note stated that the policy of the United States was to assist Great Britain with all means available short of a declaration of war. The American Government accordingly 'advised' the Iraqi Government to 'co-operate' with the British Government, for the Government of the United States was 'convinced, and sufficient evidence is available to them to show, that should Great Britain lose the war, Iraq would inevitably lose her independence which would be a calamity for all the countries of the Middle East'. Furthermore the Turkish Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs intimated to the Iraqi Minister in Ankara that he had received news from the Turkish Ambassador in Washington informing him that he had learned from official American sources that the Iraqi Government was likely to reopen diplomatic relations with Germany. The Iraqi Minister in Ankara was requested to inform the Turkish Government of the truth of this news. In his memorandum to Rashid Ali of 15 December 1940<sup>2</sup> Nuri stated:

When the Iraqi Minister mentioned to the Turkish Under-Secretary of State the contents of the Speech from the Throne on the subject, the latter said that he was inclined to believe that the policy of the Iraqi Government was to co-operate with Great Britain. Yet he would be very pleased if he could have an assurance contradicting the information he had received from their Ambassador at Washington.

To this inquiry, as well as to a similar representation made by the Egyptian Government on 8 December, Rashid Ali replied that Iraq was still bound by her Treaty of Alliance with Britain and that he had no intention of violating the terms of this treaty.

(Britain was able to exert further pressure on Rashid Ali by refusing to supply Iraq with dollars or weapons. The latter sanction, it will be recalled, was a long-standing issue which had antagonized the Iraqi army officers. As has been stated apologetically by a well-known English writer, the problem had originated thus:<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See below, Appendix III, p. 373.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix III.

<sup>3</sup> Freya Stark in *The Times*, 27 June 1941, p. 5.



It was most unfortunate that the enlargement of the Iraqi forces should coincide with our own rearmament. Iraq under her treaty rights was entitled to the best and newest we could provide: she had the same priority as the Dominions; but in fact we were unable to supply her until our reorganization was completed, and the wait for armaments went up continuously. . . . Her [Iraq's] insistence on the most up-to-date weapons was relinquished; arrangements were made for her to have older guns reconditioned as our own troops were supplied with new; we have a credit of £1,250,000; but the long delays which attended this satisfactory arrangement were so formidable that September 1939 was upon us before the negotiations were completed.

The coming of the war had aggravated the problem when Great Britain not only needed weapons for her own defence but also became naturally apprehensive lest the weapons should be used by the Rashid Ali Government against British interests. When the Iraqi Government expressed a desire to buy weapons from the United States, it had no adequate supplies of dollars to do so, nor was Britain willing to supply the dollars. The request of the Iraqi Government was made to Anthony Eden, the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on 9 January 1941. Eden replied that Great Britain supplied dollars only to her 'loyal allies', such as Greece, Turkey, and Egypt. When he was reminded that Iraq was also the ally of Britain, he replied in the affirmative with a smile, but said that there were a few men in Iraq who wanted 'to flirt' with the Axis Powers. 'Unfortunately', said Mr Eden, 'there was much that had been unsatisfactory in the attitude of Iraq recently.' If Iraq's attitude were modified, he continued, and showed 'loyal co-operation', then 'we could consider the question of an assignment'. 'Until that happened', Eden concluded, we 'could give no hope whatever that dollars could be made available from us for purposes for which Iraq needed them.'

Rashid Ali, in spite of pressure on him to resign, persisted in remaining in power, but no open breach occurred between him and Britain, perhaps owing to the representations of the American, Turkish, and Egyptian Governments. In consequence of the tension that developed between the Rashid Ali and the British Governments, it was tacitly agreed between the British Embassy and certain leading personalities that a truce should be observed, to be followed by the resignation of Rashid Ali in circumstances of outward calmness which would make it possible to save his face as well as the prestige of his country, i.e. by making it seem as if Rashid Ali had not submitted to foreign pressure.

Rashid Ali, however, was not the only leader in the pan-Arab group who advocated a pro-Axis policy. The Mufti's party, supported by the leading army officers, had become the backbone of the Government. It was, therefore, most unfortunate that the issue between Britain and Iraq, which should have been more carefully handled in order to avoid conflict, was reduced, in the last analysis, merely to the question of removing Rashid Ali from the premiership. (The insistence of Britain that he be removed, which aroused his indignation and disgraced him in the eyes of his colleagues, naturally forced him to throw in his lot with the extreme pan-Arab leaders.) In taking this step the British Foreign Office either acted without advice from its diplomats in Baghdad or was badly advised. When Rashid Ali was removed, Churchill, making him a scapegoat for the whole affair, reported with great satisfaction to the House of Commons that the 'pronounced' pro-Axis Rashid Ali was 'removed from power at our instance!'<sup>1</sup>

In analysing the affair in retrospect with General Nuri,<sup>2</sup> the writer expressed doubt that Rashid Ali actually wanted to precipitate a clash with the British authorities in Baghdad. Nuri at once shared this opinion and argued that Rashid Ali's political opponents, who unwisely intrigued against him at the British Embassy, were responsible for the conflict between him and the British authorities. It seems to the writer that Rashid Ali, although committed to support the broad objectives of the Mufti, was too shrewd to sacrifice his position by precipitating a clash with Britain. Rashid Ali's policy seems to have aimed at steering Iraq between Scylla and Charybdis, until the issue of the war became clear, by conforming to the letter of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty on the one hand, and seeking Axis friendship on the other. If Nuri's view that the British Embassy was misled by Rashid Ali's political opponents was right, it was the fault of none other than the British authorities in Baghdad for bringing matters to a head by advising their home Government to request the removal of Rashid Ali. (This over-simplification of the situation, as subsequent events have indicated, did not help to resolve the issue, since Rashid Ali, who was bound now to side with the extremists, returned to power within less than two months.)

<sup>1</sup> 7 May 1940, H.C. Deb., vol. 371, cols. 942-3.

<sup>2</sup> In an interview in Baghdad on 16 May 1947.

## SCHISM IN THE RASHID 'ALI GOVERNMENT

A schism in the Rashid 'Ali Government had developed ever since the question of breaking off diplomatic relations with Italy was raised by the British Embassy, but the schism was accentuated by diplomatic pressure. The two extreme members of the Cabinet—Nuri as-Sa'id and Naji Shawkat—advocated diametrically opposite policies, while the Prime Minister, whose sympathies were with Shawkat, declared that he was willing to fulfil Iraq's treaty obligations without compromising her interests. The dominant party in the army, under the Mufti's influence, had become extremely anti-British and pressed for non-cooperation with England. Rashid 'Ali, realizing that his remaining in power was dependent on the army's support, promised that he would espouse their cause, while he assured both the Regent and Nuri that he was faithful to the Treaty of Alliance with Britain.

Rashid 'Ali's attitude on the application of the treaty was to afford Britain all facilities without committing Iraq to giving assistance or changing Iraq's position from non-belligerency. In taking this stand he thought that he would win the friendship of the Axis Powers and ensure Iraq's independence should Britain lose the war. Both Shawkat and Nuri advocated more radical policies. Shawkat declared that Iraq was not bound to antagonize Britain's enemies, while Nuri, who foresaw grave dangers from Axis penetration in the Arab world, was in favour of increasing Anglo-Iraqi co-operation. Nuri perhaps sought to compel Rashid 'Ali to resign in order that he himself should assume the premiership and carry out his policy; while Rashid 'Ali, backed by the army, felt well entrenched in power and was determined never to yield to his opponents. Failing to compel Rashid 'Ali to resign, Nuri tried, as a last attempt, to influence him by the weight of his argument. In a memorandum which he submitted to Rashid 'Ali on 15 December 1940 Nuri reviewed the situation in Iraq and stated his views on foreign policy. He argued that co-operation with Britain and the United States would be more advantageous to Iraq and the Arabs and strongly urged the establishment of an Iraqi legation in Washington. He contended that better relations with these Powers would help to solve the Palestine problem in favour of the Arabs, since the United States 'have already begun to show their interest in this question'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See text of Nuri's Memorandum, Appendix III, p. 373 below.

Failing to bring Rashid 'Ali to reason, Nuri began to contemplate resignation from the Cabinet. In the examination of the Foreign Affairs budget by the Parliamentary Financial Committee, he deliberately refused to attend its meetings in order to embarrass Rashid 'Ali in Parliament. Rashid 'Ali, in the role of patriot and guardian of his country's rights, appeared before the Parliamentary Financial Committee on 21 December, to answer questions on foreign policy. He made the following statement on Iraq's foreign policy.

The world is passing through critical circumstances . . . and the position of small States is indeed very difficult. The essential principles of our foreign policy are the following:

(1) The maintenance of the security of the country; avoidance of any action that might lead to involving her in this war; and the exertion of all possible efforts in order to maintain the peace which is enjoyed throughout the country in spite of the present international struggle, and in order to make it possible for the people to carry on their fruitful work and to devote all their efforts to serve their country or to defend her in case of any [foreign] aggression.

(2) The achievement of the [Arab] national ideas which Iraq had determined to fulfil, since Iraq, as one of the independent Arab countries, is in a position to realize the [Arab] national aspirations.

(3) The fulfilment of our international obligations such as the Treaty of Arab Friendship and the [Sa'dabad] non-aggression pact, to which we are bound with our neighbours. As for our obligations to our ally Great Britain, as stipulated in our treaty with her, we have always observed them in letter and spirit, and we would like to continue to strengthen our friendship with her on a basis of mutual interest. Our cordial relations are increasingly developing with other friendly Powers.

My colleagues have, together with me, determined faithfully to follow a policy based on the foregoing three principles. It is obvious enough that the ideals connecting these three principles require great attention and [moral] strength and, therefore, we should not allow any kind of propaganda [to influence us]. The various countries taking part in the present struggle will always try to exploit all possible forces in defence of their own cause, and Iraq, owing to her important position, will attract attention. We should therefore know our safe way in this troubled sea in order to be able to protect our country and realize her supreme aspirations.

It is my duty to say that Iraq, as an independent country, should always seek in her conduct to serve her own interests and realize her national aspirations; she therefore should not follow [a policy] which would be inconsistent with those interests and aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For text of the statement see *al-Bilad*, 22 Dec. 1940.



While Rashid Ali's declaration paid lip-service to Anglo-Iraqi friendship, it dwelt much more on Iraq's own interests and national aspirations, which, to the pan-Arab group, were no longer in accord with British interests. Rumours were circulated that Nuri and his group were advocating co-operation with Britain to the extent of declaring war on the Axis Powers; Rashid Ali's policy of keeping Iraq out of the war therefore increased his prestige. His statement was favourably commented upon in the local press,<sup>1</sup> and was over-credulously acclaimed and applauded by the pan-Arabs.<sup>2</sup>

Conflicting rumours about Rashid Ali's policy and dissension in his Cabinet were bound to have repercussions in Parliament. Some of the moderate Iraqi nationalists, who were not prepared to support Nuri's policy with regard to Anglo-Iraqi co-operation, were opposed to Rashid Ali's position in regard to Iraq's treaty obligations to Great Britain. Senator Jamil al-Midfa'i, an opponent of Nuri, was persuaded by his moderate supporters to remonstrate with Rashid Ali on denying Britain her rights under the treaty and to state, as Rashid Ali did, his ideas on Iraq's foreign policy. On 4 January Midfa'i raised the question in the Senate. He inquired:

(1) Has Iraq been approached with a request to undertake commitments in excess of her treaty of alliance with Great Britain which might result in plunging this country into the war?

(2) Is the absence of the responsible Minister [of Foreign Affairs] due to any difference of opinion with regard to foreign policy?

Rashid Ali, without hesitation, made the following reply:

The answer to the two questions is in the negative. For there has been no request from our ally in excess of the treaty, nor is there [any] difference of opinion between the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs with regard to [our] foreign policy.

Midfa'i, thanking the Prime Minister for his reply and assuming that there was in fact a difference of opinion between the Prime Minister and his Foreign Minister, made the following statement:

Everyone of us wishes that there should be no difference among ministers, more particularly as regards foreign policy. For our foreign policy with regard to our ally Great Britain is a traditional policy on which Iraq's independence and integrity are based. We should, [therefore], uphold

<sup>1</sup> See [Ali Haydar Sulayman,] 'Iraq's Foreign Policy', *al-Bilad*, 24 Dec. 1940; [Siddiq Shanshal,] 'The State should be Equal to its International Obligations', *ibid.* 26 Dec. 1940.

<sup>2</sup> See *al-Istiqlal*, 23, 25, and 26 Dec. 1940.

[such a policy] as it is consistent with our own interest, geographically, economically and militarily. . . . We should not be misled by certain mischievous words or publications into what may not be [consistent] with Iraq's interests.

Iraq is fully independent and had achieved her independence at a time when British strength was at its maximum, thanks to: First, the sacrifices borne [by Iraq] and the blood shed in the Iraqi revolt which owed its spirit to the great Arab Revolt; secondly, the great personality of the late King Faysal, and the co-operation of those persons around him who knew how to realize Iraq's [national] interests; thirdly, we should also add the nobility and political wisdom and character of the British people who [readily] appreciated that Iraq was fit for independence and the enjoyment of her natural rights. . . .

It is clear, therefore, that any policy which is inconsistent with these considerations could not be in the interests of Iraq nor should it be regarded as the policy of Iraq. Anyone who is working against such a traditional policy would represent only his own personal policy which Iraq could not approve. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Midfa'i's statement in the Senate was hailed by an important section of the people as the sound policy for Iraq to follow and may be regarded as expressing the position of the moderate Iraqi nationalists.

#### THE FIFTH COUP D'ÉTAT

Britain's request to remove Rashid Ali from the premiership induced the Regent to intervene and use his influence to force Rashid Ali to resign. At the outset the Regent only expressed a desire, through the Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, for the Cabinet to resign. This prompted Rashid Ali, Naji as-Suwaydi, Minister of Finance, and General Taha al-Hashimi, Minister of Defence, to request an audience with the Regent in which they pointed out that the King, under the constitution, had no right to request the Cabinet to resign.<sup>2</sup> This incident resulted in an obvious coolness between the Regent and the Prime Minister; and the former, in order to show his dissatisfaction with the Cabinet's conduct, often absented himself from the Royal *Diwan*, which meant that a number of Cabinet decisions and ordinances were either delayed or not approved at all.

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Senate*, 15th Sess., 1940-1, pp. 42-43.

<sup>2</sup> The constitution of Iraq, before the Second Amendment, was silent on this matter. Practice was, however, that the King could not dismiss a Cabinet. See General Taha's subsequent declarations in Parliament (*Proc. Senate*, 15th Sess., 1940-1, pp. 86-87).

General Taha, who tried to resolve the issue, requested an audience with the Regent and pointed out to him that since matters had gone from bad to worse and the Cabinet could no longer continue in office, it was nevertheless not proper that the Regent should request the Cabinet to resign at the behest of Britain.<sup>1</sup> He therefore proposed either that both Nuri and Naji Shawkat should resign, since they were two extreme protagonists of opposing policies; or that the whole Cabinet should resign on condition that Naji as-Suwaydi, Minister of Finance, should form a new Cabinet.<sup>2</sup> General Taha favoured the first alternative, while the Regent preferred the second. Since Rashid Ali, supported by the army, would not resign, Nuri presented his resignation on 21 January 1941. Shawkat had not yet resigned when Nuri's resignation was submitted to the Regent, and it seemed as if there were a plot to drop only Nuri from the Cabinet.<sup>3</sup> It was just too late when Rashid Ali and General Taha had an audience with the Regent on 25 January, and informed him that Shawkat had also presented his letter of resignation on that day. The Regent, who was anxious to get rid of Rashid Ali, insisted that the whole Cabinet should resign and again asked for Rashid Ali's resignation.

On 26 January the Cabinet held a meeting to discuss the crisis. General Taha and Sadiq al-Bassam had already decided to resign and the prevailing opinion was that the Cabinet should resign.<sup>4</sup> The other ministers, except the Ministers of Finance and of Social Affairs, presented their resignations individually in order to induce the Prime Minister to resign. This meant, Rashid Ali was told, that the Cabinet's life should have come to an end, since the majority of the ministers had resigned.<sup>5</sup> But Rashid Ali would not tender his resignation. His view was, as he subsequently pointed out to the writer, that the Prime Minister was always appointed individually to this position by the King, and that the other ministers were appointed

<sup>1</sup> Statement made by General Taha to the writer on 15 Dec. 1946.

<sup>2</sup> *Speech by the Regent* on 14 July 1941 (Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1941), pp. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> In an interview with the writer in Cairo (10 Mar. 1955), Rashid Ali stated that General Taha was tempted to resign because he was promised by the Regent to succeed him (Rashid) as Prime Minister. When asked by the writer whether a promise was ever given to General Taha, the Regent (in an interview with the writer on 8 June 1955) stated that no promise was ever given, but it was already understood that the next Cabinet would be formed by General Taha.

<sup>5</sup> Art. 64 of the constitution, before the Second Amendment, stated that the number of ministers in the Government should not exceed nine, nor be less than six.

upon the Prime Minister's recommendation. Thus unless the Cabinet lost the confidence of Parliament, it was not considered to have resigned until the Prime Minister himself submitted his resignation. The question of unconstitutionality therefore did not arise, Rashid Ali argued; and this opinion was shared by a number of experts in constitutional law whom the Regent had consulted.<sup>1</sup>

At this juncture Rashid Ali, who had already been promised the backing of the army, actually invited the Four Colonels to intervene. It was decided to dispatch Colonel Mahmud Salman, officer commanding the air force (who had been on good personal terms with the Regent), to have an audience with the Regent in order to induce him to keep Rashid Ali in power. The Regent, in the presence of the President of the Senate, Muhammad as-Sadr, and the other Colonels (who had joined Mahmud Salman), replied that, according to the constitution, the selection of the Prime Minister was a prerogative of the King. He therefore advised the army to keep out of politics, since the laws of the land prohibited the army's interference in politics. The Four Colonels, however, by threatening to place the army on the alert and by the intercession of Muhammad as-Sadr, compelled the Regent to acquiesce. A royal decree was issued on 28 January 1941 appointing only two new ministers, Yunis as-Sab'awi and Naji Shawkat.<sup>2</sup> On the following day Naji as-Suwaydi, Minister of Finance, resigned on the ground that he would not sit in the Cabinet with a colleague of so humble an origin as Yunis as-Sab'awi.<sup>3</sup>

On 30 January Parliament was convened, and though the Prime Minister arrived late, discussion was initiated by Ali Jawdat, who demanded an explanation of what had been taking place behind the scenes. Several other members, in like manner, criticized the conduct of the Government; and one of them, Zamil al-Manna', bluntly asked the Prime Minister to resign.<sup>4</sup> When Rashid Ali appeared in the Chamber and sensed the hostility of the discussion, he refused to reply to any question raised but, feeling that he had been insulted, left the House immediately and proceeded to the Regent with a royal decree in his hand requesting him to sign it in order to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies. The Regent was not in favour of dissolution, but in the circumstances could not oppose Rashid Ali. He asked to be

<sup>1</sup> Information supplied by Rashid Ali (10 Mar. 1955).

<sup>2</sup> *The Regent's Speech*, pp. 9-10; cf. Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, pp. 191-6.

<sup>3</sup> Sab'awi was a courageous and self-made young man whom the writer had known as a class-mate in a Mosul high school.

<sup>4</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 9th Sess., 1940, pp. 270-3.



allowed to consider the matter until the evening and said that he would see the Prime Minister that night. Rashid Ali agreed.

The Regent had triumphed. He was advised to leave Baghdad secretly in the afternoon, in order to escape pressure from Rashid Ali and the Four Colonels who constantly threatened him with force. The Regent went to Diwaniya where General Ibrahim ar-Rawi, officer commanding the Fourth Division, was friendly to him. General Rawi, who did not wish to be involved in politics, was indeed in a very awkward position; but, as a soldier formerly in the service of the Regent's grandfather, King Husayn of Hijaz, he welcomed the Regent as a guest in his house. From Diwaniya the Regent was able to get in touch with several loyal politicians and entertained the idea, had General Rawi been so disposed, of using the Diwaniya forces against the Four Colonels in case Rashid Ali refused to resign.

The news of the Regent's departure from the capital reached Rashid Ali when he was entertaining the Four Colonels at his house. The whole party, except Naji Shawkat, moved to Rashid Ali's office at the Council of Ministers. There was a heated discussion in which Colonel Fahmi Sa'id and Yunis as-Sab'awi recommended opposition to the Regent's move; but the others were hesitant. At this juncture General Taha and Muhammad as-Sadr, who came to see Rashid Ali in his office, whispered the advice to him that he should resign. In resuming discussion with his colleagues, Rashid Ali pointed out that although the Regent could not possibly win by initiating civil war, he was opposed to starting a civil war. Having failed to dissolve Parliament and expecting to face a hostile House the next day, Rashid Ali perhaps felt that he was outmanœuvred and decided to resign. He tendered his resignation by cable to the Regent at Diwaniya on 31 January. Putting the entire responsibility for the crisis on the Regent, who had fallen under foreign influence, Rashid Ali said:

Sir,—I have to lead the country towards the attainment of its ideals, following a policy consistent with the national interest.

I had no doubt that your Royal Highness was anxious to overcome the difficulties which stood in the way of those who are sincere; but foreign interests—which did not wish to see mutual confidence reigning between you and a Government which wished to serve its country sincerely in accordance with its own programme—induced your Royal Highness to express dissatisfaction with its activities.

This was shown by your action in leaving the Royal *Diwan* and remaining in the Palace, a fact which adversely affected the Cabinet's freedom of action.

Your Royal Highness's dissatisfaction was again demonstrated by your departure from the capital and by suspending your approval of various *iradas* submitted to you, especially those dealing with the dissolution of the Majlis. I had taken the responsibility for administration during these critical times, having found it necessary to appeal to the country in order to obtain the people's views on its policy, to ensure the closer co-operation between the Executive and the Legislature which is necessary in the present world situation.

In view of the above, I beg to be relieved of the responsibility of continuing in office and I request your Royal Highness to accept my resignation, etc.<sup>1</sup>

The Regent accepted this long-awaited resignation with great relief, but in his reply declared that the crisis which had taken place was 'undesirable from all quarters'. He invited Muhammad as-Sadr and other prominent politicians to consult with him at Diwaniya before the new Cabinet should be formed. The Four Colonels, who were afraid of their fate, at once prevailed upon Amin Zaki, Acting Chief of the General Staff, to see Muhammad as-Sadr before he left Baghdad and to advise him that the new Cabinet should be formed by General Taha. To confirm the truth of this, Muhammad as-Sadr got in touch with the Four Colonels, who, as he pointed out to the writer, threatened in the most violent terms to revolt if the premiership were not entrusted to General Taha, the only politician in whom they had any confidence.<sup>2</sup> General Taha, who believed in the sincerity and genuine patriotism of the Four Colonels, was of the opinion that he could effect reconciliation between them and the Regent and was, therefore, from the point of view of the army, the only possible candidate for the premiership after the fall of Rashid Ali.

At Diwaniya Muhammad as-Sadr candidly described the situation to the Regent and pointed out to him that he had to choose either to meet the demand of the Four Colonels and invite General Taha to form the new Cabinet, or to remain at Diwaniya, entrusting the premiership to whomsoever he wanted, and oppose the Four Colonels, even if the situation led to civil war. The Regent, it seems, was disposed to accept the challenge of civil war had General Rawi come boldly to his support. General Rawi apologetically pointed out to the writer that while his sympathies were with the Regent, he could not,

<sup>1</sup> See *Iraq Times*, 31 Jan. 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, pp. 203-4.

<sup>3</sup> It was understood, Sadr said to the writer, that had the Regent chosen the second alternative, he would have asked Sadr himself to form the new Cabinet.

as a loyal soldier, support civil war; he was responsible only to his immediate superior, the Chief of the General Staff, and his support of the Regent would be regarded as raising a rebellion against the General Staff. Met with the coolness and hesitancy of General Rawi, the Regent, on second thoughts, decided to invite General Taha to form the new Cabinet.<sup>1</sup>

Before he would return to the capital, the Regent asked Taha to place the Four Colonels on the retired list; but Taha, elevated to power by the Four in order to shield them from any harm, sincerely believed in the possibility of reconciling the army with the Regent. But such a delicate task needed not the General, who had no patience with negotiations, but a diplomat skilled enough to accomplish the almost impossible. The Four, it will be remembered, were not prepared to sidestep power; while the Regent was waiting for the opportune moment to break them. Failing to achieve this 'compromise', Taha merely postponed the clash with the army.

#### GENERAL TAHA'S CABINET

General Taha agreed to form the new Government on 1 February on the understanding that he would try to improve Iraq's relations with Great Britain and restrain the power of the army officers.<sup>2</sup> Since Taha knew the Four Colonels very well and since the Four had confidence in his goodwill towards them, Taha believed that the situation would return to normal. He was of the opinion that the Four Colonels were ready to submit obediently to the Regent and to remain loyal to him, if the latter promised to pardon them. The Four were, however, fearful that the Regent, once he had re-established his authority, would try to break their power. Taha, it seems, believed in the sincerity and genuine patriotism of the Four and honestly tried to effect a permanent understanding between them and the Regent. In an interview with the writer, Taha pointed out that he was anxious for reconciliation lest suspicion between the Regent and the Four should be exploited by certain ambitious politicians using the Four as tools in order to achieve power. He accordingly urged the Regent to treat the Four benevolently.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Regent's Speech*, p. 13.

<sup>2</sup> General Taha assumed the portfolio of Defence in addition to the premiership; Tawfiq as-Suwaydi was given Foreign Affairs, 'Umar Nazmi the Interior and Justice, Ali Mumtaz Finance and Public Works and Transportation, Sayyid Abd al-Mahdi Economics, Hamdi al-Pachachi Social Affairs, and Sadiq al-Bassam Education.

On 3 February the Regent returned to Baghdad, welcomed by the Government and leading dignitaries. He suggested that Taha should curb the activities of the Four and repudiate the policy that had been followed by Rashid Ali. On 6 February Taha made a statement in Parliament (before it was adjourned for two weeks) in which he accepted the general statement made by Rashid Ali before the parliamentary Financial Committee,<sup>1</sup> but repudiated Rashid Ali's assertion, in his letter of resignation,<sup>2</sup> that he was forced to resign under foreign pressure.<sup>3</sup> It was reported that Rashid Ali reproached Taha for his public repudiation of Rashid's assertion that he resigned under foreign pressure, and that Taha, in order to conciliate Rashid Ali, inserted in the Cabinet's programme (allegedly at Rashid's instance) a statement to the effect that he would carry out Iraq's national mission.<sup>4</sup> In this programme General Taha announced that his Government intended to strengthen the position of Parliament and submit to its control.<sup>5</sup> In the few days before Parliament was prorogued on 31 March, and encouraged by the Regent's refusal to dissolve Parliament on 30 January, there were lively debates daily from 23 to 26 February and a few members spoke out in favour of the Regent and against Rashid Ali.

Taha, as might have been expected, could do little to improve the tense situation. He was, as C. J. Edmonds pointed out, 'a slave of his own past', since he was himself in no small part responsible for the policy pursued by the Rashid Ali Government.<sup>6</sup> He hoped perhaps that from the mere fact that there was a change of Government the situation would improve. In a press conference which he held on the same day on which he made his statement in Parliament (6 February), Taha warned the press representatives to exercise restraint and reminded them of the war-time press censorship decree. He also returned the officer in charge of the Office of Press and Propaganda to his military duties; but he could hardly go beyond these measures.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 199 above.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 204-5 above.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 9th Sess., 1940, p. 276.

<sup>4</sup> In an interview with the writer General Taha stated that his Cabinet's programme was drawn up without prior consultation with Rashid Ali. Rashid Ali also told the present writer that he was not consulted on this matter.

<sup>5</sup> The Cabinet's programme was announced in Parliament on 22 Feb. 1941. See *ibid.*, p. 311.

<sup>6</sup> Taha was President of the Palestine Defence Committee. 'In this capacity', writes C. J. Edmonds, 'he would have said and done things which would embarrass him when he became a Minister or Prime Minister responsible for policy, especially Anglo-Iraqi relations' (letter to the writer, dated 6 Nov. 1957).



His friendly approach to persuade Colonel Salah ad-Din as-Sabbagh to accept the post of officer commanding the Second Division, replacing Colonel Qasim Maqsum in Kirkuk, and to transfer Colonel Kamil Shabib from the command of the First Division to the Fourth were unacceptable.

Taha's attitude towards the army officers was regarded by the British authorities as irresolute, and he was pressed to take remedial action; but he insisted on a policy of 'compromise' and continued to persuade the Four Colonels to accept a conciliatory policy towards Britain. In one of his friendly conversations with the Four—in the absence of Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, Foreign Minister, who had gone to see Eden in Cairo—General Taha intimated that Iraq would have to follow British policy, as requested by Eden. To the Four Colonels this intimation meant that Taha had finally decided to break off Iraq's relations with Italy. On 28 February 1941 a meeting of the 'Arab Committee' was held under the presidency of the Mufti, attended by Rashid Ali, Naji Shawkat, Yunis as-Sab'awi, and three of the Four Colonels, at which the policy of General Taha's Government was reviewed.<sup>1</sup> It was decided, *inter alia*, that to break off diplomatic relations with Italy was inconsistent with Arab interests, and that, if Taha were to insist on carrying out a policy unacceptable to the nation, he should be asked to resign in favour of a Government to be formed by Rashid Ali. This meeting sealed the fate of Taha's Government.

Matters came to a head when Tawfiq as-Suwaydi returned from his visit to Cairo on 17 March and found that the Four Colonels were opposed to breaking off diplomatic relations with Italy. In order to carry out this policy, he contended, action must be taken by the Cabinet to remove these officers from their positions of power. Rumours and Axis propaganda played a considerable part in creating an atmosphere of fear and suspicion between the army officers and the Regent. The Regent, apprehensive as to the movements of the Four Colonels, insisted that General Taha should take disciplinary action against them.

In the circumstances General Taha, who knew by this time that he could no longer restrain the Four, issued an order on 26 March, as

<sup>1</sup> See Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, pp. 218–20. This is perhaps the meeting at which the 'Arab Committee', composed of Iraqi leaders under the Mufti's presidency, was formally organized and an oath was taken to carry out the pan-Arab mission. This must be distinguished from the broader Arab Committee referred to on p. 164.

Minister of Defence, transferring one of them, Lieut.-Colonel Kamil Shabib, officer commanding the First Division (headquarters in Baghdad) to Diwaniya to take the place of General Rawi, officer commanding the Fourth Division.<sup>1</sup> Shabib, though the weakest of the Four, was infuriated and is said to have torn the order in two. The Four Colonels protested and persuaded Taha to keep Shabib in his position. But this move gave direct evidence that the Regent had decided to break up the military group. Taha apparently saw the futility of the transfer and, in order to keep his relations with the Four friendly, sought to avoid forcing them to rebel. He therefore promised them that he would ignore the order of transfer but extracted from them a promise that they would no longer interfere in politics. The Regent, however, did not think that it was in the interests of the country to retract, i.e. to withdraw the order, under the threat and personal influence of the Four.<sup>2</sup> The transfer was nevertheless not carried out.

On 31 March the parliamentary session was due to come to an end. The Regent insisted that before Parliament dissolved he should discuss the situation with the Cabinet lest the Four should take advantage of the parliamentary recess to put pressure on him again. However, the Prime Minister, at the meeting of the Council of Ministers presided over by the Regent, made a statement to the effect that the Four Colonels had pledged their military honour that they would no longer interfere in politics.<sup>3</sup>

When Parliament was prorogued on the same day Rashid Ali and his group must have felt relieved, since they believed that the only opposition to their move had come from Parliament. The Four Colonels had already given up hope that General Taha could be persuaded to agree to the Arab Committee's decision of 28 February, and the Rashid Ali group, it seems, were able to induce them to believe that Taha had betrayed them by agreeing with the Regent's proposal to transfer one of them. They also concluded that unless Taha was overthrown, their pan-Arab ideas would not be put into practice; while Rashid Ali's return to power would also mean that their personal prestige would be enhanced.

<sup>1</sup> It was also contemplated, had such an arrangement proved workable, to transfer Colonel Sabbagh, officer commanding the Third Division, to Ba'quba (on the northern outskirts of Baghdad). See text of the judgement and sentences of the court martial on Rashid Ali and his group in *al-Akhbar*, 5 May 1942. Cf. *The Regent's Speech*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *The Regent's Speech*, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

## THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH COUPS D'ÉTAT

On 1 April 1941, in the evening, a meeting was held at Rashid Camp attended by Rashid Ali, General Amin Zaki, Acting Chief of the General Staff, and the Four Colonels. It was decided to place the army on the alert and to raise a rebellion if General Taha's Cabinet refused to resign. Amin Zaki and Fahmi Sa'id were chosen to deliver the ultimatum to Taha. The two heralds reached the General's home an hour before midnight and broke to him the grave news of the army's new move. Taha tried to dissuade them from embarking on a new and dangerous step which would create another crisis; but the messengers stated that the army no longer had faith in the Regent, who had entirely fallen under foreign influence, and who had developed an uncompromising attitude towards the Four Colonels. They advised Taha to discuss the situation with Rashid Ali, in whom the army had full confidence, and to co-operate with him in the formation of the new Cabinet. They told him, likewise, that the army had actually surrounded the Regent's palace in order to prevent him from escaping. Taha replied that there was absolutely no need to go so far and that he was not prepared to co-operate with Rashid Ali. Having failed to win over Taha, the messengers asked for his resignation; and, under indirect threat, the General had no choice but to write a letter of resignation. The letter was hurriedly carried to Rashid Ali, who saw now that the door to power had again been thrown open to him. By this time the army had already marched to the capital and had taken virtual control of key positions around it. Taha communicated to the Regent the news of the new military coup and stated that he had tendered his resignation under pressure.<sup>1</sup>

Rashid Ali and the Four Colonels held another meeting at Rashid Camp on the morning of 2 April. They decided to send another deputation to Taha to try again to persuade him to join their movement. Rashid Ali, General Zaki, and Colonel Sabbagh proceeded to Taha's house, where, to their surprise, they found General Taha's Cabinet holding a meeting. Taha tried again to dissuade the army officers from their action and promised to reconcile them with the Regent. Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, Foreign Minister, pointed out that the position of Rashid Ali, which depended on armed force, was uncon-

<sup>1</sup> In an interview with the writer, Amir Abd al-Ilah stated that Taha had promised to notify him forty-eight hours before he should resign; but Taha had probably forgotten his promise and the Amir had no choice but to escape from army pressure.

stitutional and that disastrous consequences might ensue. The meeting, it seems, broke up without final agreement.

Shortly before noon, however, Rashid Ali and the army officers learned that the Regent had again escaped and that a solution of the new crisis would have to be found. In the evening it was realized by Rashid Ali and the army officers that they would have to proceed with their intended coup d'état and assume power, since there was no possibility of matters returning to normal. The Regent had escaped and was determined not to yield. The Rashid Ali group was also determined not to give in, as they had done when the Regent escaped to Diwaniya, and decided, if necessary, to depose the Regent.

On the night of 1 April the Regent learned that his palace was surrounded by the army. Disguised and unnoticed he was able to cross to his aunt's house where he passed the night in considerable anxiety. The next morning, again disguised, he crossed the Tigris in a motorboat and escaped to Habbaniya, whence he was flown to Basra.<sup>1</sup> He tried to organize a resistance movement but failed, for Rashid Ali had issued orders to the Army Command in the south to arrest him. Aware of his insecure position, the Regent immediately left Basra for a British gunboat in the Shatt al-Arab, and then went to Transjordan. General Nuri, Midfa'i, and Ali Jawdat, who had been able to escape being arrested by Rashid Ali, joined him shortly afterwards; but Salih Jabr, then Mutasarrif of Basra, who took an active part in supporting the Regent, was brought under arrest to Baghdad and was dismissed from office. He was later released and left for Persia.

<sup>1</sup> 'It was fortunate for the future of Iraq', stated the official record of the Persia and Iraq Command, '... that the American Legation were ready to act, in the interest of the lawful ruler of the country, with boldness and resource. On April 2nd the Regent, with their assistance, escaped to Habbaniya; from there he was flown to Basra, where he hoped to gather the loyalists about him and form a new cabinet' (Great Britain, Central Office of Information, *Paiforce: The Official Story of the Persia and Iraq Command, 1941-46* [London, 1948], p. 18).



CHAPTER IX  
THE CLIMAX  
APRIL-MAY 1941

OUTMANŒUVRED by the Regent's escape, Rashid Ali, with the full backing of the army, proceeded to depose the Regent and to establish a new regime. The army officers, who had taken full control of the country, formed a temporary military Government, known as the Government of National Defence, and entrusted its leadership to Rashid Ali. General Amin Zaki, Acting Chief of the General Staff, though he lacked courage and enthusiasm, came completely under the influence of the Four Colonels. He was prevailed upon to sign a speech, prepared by Sab'awi and Ali Mahmud, which was broadcast on 3 April 1941, giving an elaborate apology for the army's new move.<sup>1</sup> The text of the speech follows:

The nation is aware that His Highness Amir 'Abd al-Ilah, the Regent, has lately been contravening the regulations of the Regency, even to the extent of not hesitating to endeavour to obtain approval of certain people for his own accession to the Throne. He failed to carry out the duties entrusted to him and tried to destroy the national army which is the guardian of the nation's unity and integrity, and which has always been known for its loyalty to the Throne and its desire to safeguard peace and order. . . .

Numerous endeavours were made to induce him to change his attitude and to respect his constitutional obligations. He was reminded repeatedly that as a Regent, under the provisions of the constitution, he was 'not responsible', but the advice was not followed.

This unhappy situation had an adverse effect on the interests of the country and the machinery of the State was slowed down. The nation's feeling of indignation against the Regent and his suite increased to such an extent that H.E. the Prime Minister, Sayyid Taha al-Hashimi, was compelled to resign to avoid a share of this responsibility.

Instead of His Highness being at his official headquarters to exercise his constitutional powers, without being affected by party or political bias, he threw aside the duties of the Regency, ignoring the rights of the nation and suspending the operation of the constitution. . . .

The nation struggled very hard to establish its independence and bore

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, p. 228.

great sacrifices to ensure the stability of the country. It is not easy, therefore, for the people to allow such excesses to continue endangering the safety of the State.

In view of these circumstances the administration has been entrusted to a Government of National Defence headed by H.E. Sayyid Rashid 'Ali al-Gaylani, who is a firm believer in the nation's right to live a free and happy existence and in its ability to preserve its independence and national obligations. His Excellency has been requested by the army to accept this heavy responsibility until the necessary constitutional measures can be taken in a peaceful atmosphere and the situation returns to normal. This decision was taken by the army; it was compelled to take it to safeguard the country's integrity and safety.

The army is fully confident of its ability to safeguard our dear country, depending on the co-operation of the army chiefs and the national leaders. We have no doubt that we shall have the sincere co-operation of the nation and the government officials, and that the new Government of National Defence will see that the country emerges successfully from the present crisis and will restore stability to the machinery of State.

People of Iraq! It is our duty to appreciate to the full our national obligations and to co-operate in the preservation of our independence and national sovereignty. You should take no heed of the reports spread by malicious propaganda. Remember the heavy sacrifices you bore in your struggle to establish a State which is fully aware of its international obligations and which resents being deprived of any of its rights. Remember that you are all responsible before God and the country for the defence of your country's integrity and the continuance of the happy life of the nation.<sup>1</sup>

Following this broadcast Rashid Ali made the following short but firm statement in which he announced the programme of his Government.

Dear Citizens, — You are aware that I prefer deeds to words, and for that reason I have not spoken to you by radio before. But now I am compelled to speak to you in view of the important events that have taken place in the country.

An hour ago you heard the proclamation by the Chief of the General Staff. You now appreciate the reasons which caused the army to accept responsibility for the preservation of peace and order in the country and for safeguarding the constitution from any excesses. This responsibility has now been handed over to me.

Since I have always devoted myself to the service of the country, I found it my duty, at a critical moment, to accept this responsibility, after the resignation of H.E. Sayyid Taha al-Hashimi from the premiership and his failure to carry out the duties of the premiership. At the same time His

<sup>1</sup> See *Iraq Times*, 4 Apr. 1941; Arabic text in *al-Bilad*, 4 Apr. 1941.

Highness the Regent failed to carry out the duties of the Regency, thereby disregarding the constitution and exposing the country to great dangers.

Having regard to these considerations, I have undertaken responsibility for the administration of the Government of National Defence referred to in the proclamation by the Chief of the General Staff. I have also undertaken to preserve peace and order until the situation becomes normal and respect for the constitution is secured.

The programme of this Government is similar to that of my late Cabinet, as publicly announced. Its chief points were: (1) to refrain from exposing the country to the dangers of war; (2) to fulfil our national mission; (3) to fulfil all the international obligations of this country, together with the continuance of good relations with neighbouring Arab States.

Furthermore, I announce that the new Government will uphold justice in all its dealings and will respect the rights and the liberties of citizens. . . .

I am fully confident that public opinion, which has shown its approval of my policy on various occasions, will again show its patriotism and loyalty, thereby assisting me in carrying out my difficult duties and leading the country to safety and the fulfilment of its sacred aspirations.

I appeal to all my countrymen to go on with their work and to beware of harmful intrigues. I end my speech by wishing His Majesty King Faysal II long life and happiness.<sup>1</sup>

Rashid Ali's new move aroused great enthusiasm at the outset; thousands of telegrams, inspired as well as spontaneous, flooded his office and a number of adventurous young men went in person to Baghdad and volunteered for service. National organizations such as the Muthanna Club and the Futuwwa formally declared their support for the movement.<sup>2</sup> The discontented intelligentsia, including the young nationalistic teachers and their students, were probably the most enthusiastic supporters. While such enthusiasm reflected a certain amount of genuine patriotism, a good deal was probably stimulated by extremists or adventurers in hope of immediate returns.

On the same day the High Defence Council, which had not met since it was adjourned by General Taha in mid-1940, was called to a meeting, presided over by Rashid Ali, and decided to send a note to the British Government demanding that it should not interfere in the domestic affairs of Iraq; to dispatch a force to Basra to oppose any counter-move against the new Government; and to arrest Salih Jabr, Mutasarrif of Basra, who had sided with the Regent. The Government of National Defence was entrusted with carrying out these decisions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Iraq Times*, 4 Apr. 1941; Arabic text in *al-Bilad*, 4 Apr. 1941.

<sup>2</sup> The Muthanna Club issued a statement to this effect on 10 Apr. 1941 (see *al-Bilad*, 11 Apr. 1941).

<sup>3</sup> Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, pp. 230-1.

Soon after the new Government was established, Rashid Ali, though fully supported by the army, began to make preparations to summon Parliament in order to legalize his action.<sup>1</sup> The convocation of Parliament, however, required the proper legal formality, a decree by the Regent, which it was not possible to obtain. This technical hitch (which after the fall of Rashid Ali was regarded as the sole basis for declaring his regime unconstitutional) was overlooked at the time, and Parliament was summoned by Sayyid Hasan Haydar, second Vice-President of the Chamber of Deputies, since the President and Vice-President declined to do so.<sup>2</sup> Ninety-four out of 108 members attended, including those who were ardent supporters of the Regent; but it was obvious that the opposition members had no longer the power or the courage to take a stand against Rashid Ali.<sup>3</sup>

Parliament met on 10 April and elected Alwan al-Yasiri, an old tribal shaykh who had distinguished himself in the Iraq revolt of 1920, as a temporary President. Rashid Ali addressed the joint session and reviewed the internal developments which led up to the coup d'état. He pointed out that the crisis had arisen when the Regent had fled and General Taha, the Prime Minister, had resigned. Thereupon it was deemed necessary to establish a Government of National Defence for the safety of the country. In appealing to Parliament to restore the situation to normal, Rashid Ali moved to depose Amir Abd al-Ilah and to appoint Sharif Sharaf, a distant relative of the King, as the new Regent. There was little speech-making, for it was obvious that in the circumstances no one could have openly opposed these proposals. Naji as-Suwaydi, who was not expected to support Rashid Ali's new move, made a speech in support of the new regime. He possibly saw the hopelessness of the Regent's cause after he had left the country, and sought to resolve the constitutional crisis by advising Parliament to approve Rashid Ali's action. However, in giving his support Suwaydi insisted that Rashid Ali should promise Parliament and the nation to respect the constitution and never again to contravene its provisions. Rashid Ali, with proper show of public

<sup>1</sup> In an interview with the writer, Rashid Ali said that a few army officers suggested to him that he should govern the country without Parliament, since the parliamentary regime had become meaningless; but Rashid Ali was anxious to prove, by not dissolving it, that the very Parliament that had supported the Regent was in favour of his movement.

<sup>2</sup> Sayyid Hasan Haydar, after the collapse of the Rashid Ali regime, declared in Parliament on 17 Nov. 1941 that he called Parliament under pressure of the army (*Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 9th Sess., 1941, pp. 44-46).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25. See also *Proc. Senate*, 16th Sess., 1941, pp. 13-14.



spirit, solemnly declared that he would respect the constitution. The President, Shaykh Yasiri, put Rashid Ali's motion to the vote and it was approved unanimously. The new Regent was then called on to take an oath before Parliament, and the meeting came to an end.<sup>1</sup>

Sharif Sharaf, the new Regent, proceeded immediately afterwards to the Royal *Diwan* where he received a host of visitors offering their congratulations. He approved General Taha's resignation as Prime Minister, signed on 1 April 1941, and invited Rashid Ali to form a new Cabinet. It was thus that the Government of National Defence came to an end and the situation was then deemed to have returned to 'normal'.

Rashid Ali spared no time in completing the formation of his Cabinet. He assumed the portfolio of Interior in addition to the premiership, and offered Finance and Defence to Naji as-Suwaydi and Naji Shawkat. Ali Mahmud and Yunis as-Sab'awi, the two enthusiastic supporters of Rashid Ali, were given the portfolios of Justice and Economics.<sup>2</sup> When officially invested with the seals of office, Rashid Ali made a speech in which he expressed his great satisfaction with the enthusiasm and support of the nation and promised to realize its national aspirations. He appealed to the Government officials to co-operate in carrying out his programme and applying the law of the land with efficiency and justice. He concluded that a new chapter in the history of the country has just been opened, which he hoped would be characterized by vitality, efficiency, and sense of responsibility.<sup>3</sup>

The new Rashid Ali regime, though regularized constitutionally by Parliament, lacked recognition by foreign Governments. The new British Ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, who arrived in Baghdad on the eve of the coup d'état, would not present his letters of credence lest this action constitute recognition of the Rashid Ali regime. The American, Turkish, and Egyptian Governments instructed their representatives in Baghdad to act in harmony with the British Embassy. King Ibn Sa'ud recognized Rashid Ali, but advised him to be careful in his relations with the British Government. The

<sup>1</sup> For verbatim minutes of the meeting see *al-Istiqlal* and *al-Bilad*, 11 Apr. 1941.

<sup>2</sup> The other members of the Cabinet were: Ra'uf al-Bahrani, Minister of Social Affairs; Muhammad Ali Mahmud, Minister of Transportation and Public Works; Musa ash-Shabandar, Minister for Foreign Affairs; and Dr Muhammad Hasan as-Salman, Minister of Education.

<sup>3</sup> For text of the speech see *al-Bilad*, 13 Apr. 1941.

Italian and Japanese Governments were quick to offer congratulations to the new rulers of Iraq, very soon to be followed by resumption of relations with Germany and formal recognition by the Soviet Union.

#### BRITISH REACTION TO RASHID 'ALI'S RETURN TO POWER

Before the Rashid Ali coup considerable anxiety about the situation in Iraq had been experienced in Britain, especially when the Iraq Government did not break off diplomatic relations with Italy in June 1940 and the Italian Legation in Baghdad became the focus of Arab nationalist and anti-British agitation. To protect the Anglo-Iranian oilfields the Government of India had a long-standing commitment to prepare one division in case of need, and on 1 July 1940 the War Cabinet decided that one brigade group of this division should be sent to Basra; however, when the Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East and the Viceroy of India thought that the arrival of troops in Iraq would do more harm than good, this decision was rescinded and the brigade group was ordered to the Sudan.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of September, when it was clear that Rashid Ali was obviously pro-Italian and the Mufti of Jerusalem was known to be actively intriguing with the Germans, the Chiefs of Staff recommended strong diplomatic action in Iraq, supported by financial and economic pressure, and the dispatch of a mission headed by a prominent person, known and respected by the Iraqis, and likely to exercise a steadying influence.<sup>2</sup> Although the War Cabinet approved these measures on 7 November, no mission was in fact sent; instead in February 1941 it was decided to make a change in British representation in Iraq, and a new Ambassador, Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, who had long experience in Iraq, was appointed, although he did not in fact reach Baghdad until 2 April. In Cairo on the way he learned that General Wavell had not enough troops to spare any for Iraq, and at Habbaniya he had a useful meeting with the Regent.

The reaction to Rashid Ali's return to power in London was naturally unfavourable; although Rashid Ali spared no time in making public the intention of his Government to respect Iraq's international obligations, and in particular her treaty obligations to

<sup>1</sup> I. S. O. Playfair, *The Mediterranean and the Middle East* (London, 1956), ii. 178.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Britain. The British position was stated by Clement Attlee in the House of Commons thus:

On every occasion that the Iraqi Army has interfered in the life of the country, His Majesty's Government have not failed to notice the unfortunate results produced. They, therefore, regret the circumstances leading up to the present situation in Iraq, which they regard as entirely unconstitutional. The rights and obligations of His Majesty's Government under the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance are, of course, unaffected by recent developments, and they are determined to ensure that the treaty is fully observed.<sup>1</sup>

Since Rashid Ali had placed his friends and supporters in all key posts and was believed to be in communication with Berlin through the Italian Embassy, and because of the general German trend southward, in particular the recent occupation of Bulgaria, the British Government decided that the situation could only be restored by force. The Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East, with the German invasion of Greece and Rommel's dash across Cyrenaica to deal with, were not in favour of armed intervention, and Wavell informed the Chiefs of Staff that he could not now spare even one battalion from Palestine. But Churchill believed that it would be necessary to 'make sure of Basra, as the Americans are increasingly keen on a great air assembling base being formed there, to which they could deliver direct'.<sup>2</sup> At Churchill's request, therefore, one infantry brigade group of the 10th Indian Division, which was to proceed from Bombay to Burma, was diverted to Basra; it was arranged that the rest of the brigade group would follow later and that about 390 infantry would be flown to Shu'ayba, the British air base near Basra, to arrive at the same time as the convoy.<sup>3</sup> Churchill issued the following general instructions to be communicated to Cornwallis concerning the disembarkation of this force:

It should be made clear to Sir Kinahan Cornwallis that our chief interest in sending troops to Iraq is the covering and establishment of a great assembly base at Basra, and that what happens up-country, except at Habbaniya, is at the present time on an altogether lower priority. Our rights under the treaty were invoked to cover this disembarkation and to avoid bloodshed, but force would have been used to the utmost limit to secure the disembarkation, if necessary. Our position at Basra therefore does not rest

<sup>1</sup> H.C. Deb., vol. 370, col. 1562.

<sup>2</sup> Churchill, iii. 225.

<sup>3</sup> J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy* (London, 1957), ii. 46-61; Playfair, ii. 179.

solely on the treaty, but also on a new event arising out of the war. No undertakings can be given that troops will be sent to Baghdad or moved through to Palestine, and the right to require such undertakings should not be recognised in respect of a Government which has in itself usurped power by a *coup d'état*, or in a country where our treaty rights have so long been frustrated in the spirit. Sir Kinahan Cornwallis should not however entangle himself by explanations.<sup>1</sup>

Cornwallis had already been notified by the Foreign Office on 13 April that forces were on their way to Basra. He met Rashid Ali for the first time on 16 April and informed him that they would arrive on the following day, but the Iraqi Ministry of Defence had already learned of the arrival of the forces and had sent reinforcements to Basra with orders to oppose the disembarkation. Cornwallis therefore informed Rashid Ali that if he would grant facilities for landing the troops, in accordance with the treaty of alliance, the British Government would be prepared to enter into formal relations with him. Rashid Ali was at first delighted with the prospect of British recognition and raised no objection.<sup>2</sup> When, on 17 and 18 April, both airborne and seaborne troops arrived, he gave prompt permission for their landing as evidence of the friendly attitude of his Government towards Britain.<sup>3</sup> But soon afterwards, under pressure from the army, messages were sent to Cornwallis demanding that the forces should pass on quickly in small detachments; and on 19 April a note was sent to the British Embassy stating that permission to land the forces would be granted on the following conditions:<sup>4</sup>

1. All measures should be taken to move the forces as soon as possible from Basra to Rutba.
2. Reasonable prior notification should be given of the arrival of further forces.
3. The total strength of the British forces in Iraq at any one time should not exceed one mixed brigade.
4. No further force should land before that which had arrived had crossed the Iraqi frontiers.

The Ambassador was told to give no undertaking about the movement of the troops to Rashid Ali, and British recognition of his

<sup>1</sup> Churchill, iii. 225-6.

<sup>2</sup> Sabbagh, *Memoirs*, pp. 237-8.

<sup>3</sup> On 22 April the Baghdad daily papers observed of Rashid Ali's permission for the landing that it was sincere evidence of his intention to observe Iraq's international obligations (*Iraq Times*, 22 and 30 Apr. 1941).

<sup>4</sup> Govt. of Iraq, *White Book*, pp. 22-23.



Government was not granted. On 26 April, two days before the arrival of further forces, Cornwallis intimated to Rashid Ali that he had been authorized to recognize his regime provided that Rashid Ali would give further co-operation under the treaty. On 28 April the Iraqi Foreign Office was notified of the impending arrival at Basra of about 2,000 men (1,600 of them non-combatant). The Foreign Office replied that the Iraqi Government could not agree to the arrival of these troops. When Cornwallis saw Rashid Ali that afternoon, Rashid Ali insisted that no further troops should land before those which had arrived previously had begun to cross the frontiers and that the retention of the British forces at Basra was a violation of the treaty. Failing to persuade Rashid Ali to take a broader meaning of the provisions of the treaty, Cornwallis told him that the landing of the troops would nevertheless take place and that the consequences of opposition would be serious. Rashid Ali replied that if the troops were disembarked before the dispatch of those already in Basra he would broadcast a denunciation of the British action. He added that he could not be responsible for the consequences which might follow the outburst of popular feeling.<sup>1</sup> It was unfortunate that two men who were so unsympathetic to each other had the task of trying to patch up the mounting differences between the two countries. Rashid Ali's attitude at this meeting was, Cornwallis told the writer, so hostile that he had to warn Rashid Ali that he was not satisfied about the safety of British women and children in Iraq and proposed to send them outside the country at once. Rashid Ali agreed to give them safe-conduct.

The British troops actually landed at Basra on 29 April. Next day Rashid Ali protested that this landing was contrary to the terms of the treaty. At this juncture, apparently, both sides realized that there was no possibility of coming to an understanding. Rashid Ali, with the full support of the army, began to make preparations for war; while the British authorities, despite their inadequate forces, were determined to resist and oust Rashid Ali and the Four Colonels from power.

In analysing the controversy over the application of the Treaty of Alliance, it is to be noted that the four conditions laid down by Rashid Ali, with the possible exception of the second, were restrictive provisions intended to exercise pressure on the British Government for political purposes. While any interpretation of a vague provision of

<sup>1</sup> *White Book*, pp. 13-16, 23-24.

a treaty is permissible, agreement on the application of a specific provision should have been reached between the parties concerned before the case arose.<sup>1</sup> Cornwallis was probably right when he pointed out to Rashid Ali on 28 April that the facilities given for safeguarding British imperial communications in Iraq under the general terms of the treaty were unlimited. The situation had become more complicated by the fact that Rashid Ali had returned to power by a coup d'état, while insisting that the British should accept his interpretation of the British rights granted in the treaty. Rashid Ali's second condition, stipulating that the British Government should give reasonable prior notification of the arrival of forces, was quite in order, since the last clause of Annexure 7 stated that such notification was required. It was for security reasons that the British Ambassador did not give 'reasonable' prior notification.

It is to be noted that neither of the two contracting parties had invoked Article 10 of the treaty, which stipulated that 'should any difference arise relative to the application or the interpretation of this Treaty, and should the High Contracting Parties fail to settle such differences by direct negotiation, then it shall be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations'. Under Article 13 of the League Covenant the dispute might have been dealt with by arbitration or judicial settlement. Since the war made it obviously impossible to refer the dispute to the Permanent Court of International Justice, it might have been dealt with by other legal procedures. It was thus that, while the machinery for settling any dispute arising from the interpretation or application of the treaty was provided, only direct negotiation was actually used. Neither arbitration, nor judicial settlement, nor any other legal procedure was exhausted before resort was had to war.

#### THE THIRTY DAYS' WAR<sup>2</sup>

On 29 April, the day when the British forces landed at Basra, the Iraqi Army High Command, under the full control of the Four Colonels, ordered the Iraqi forces stationed at Rashid Camp, seven

<sup>1</sup> 'If the meaning of a stipulation is ambiguous', says Oppenheim, 'and one of the contracting parties, at a time before a case arises for the application of the stipulation, makes known what meaning it attributes to it, the other party or parties cannot, when a case for its application does occur, insist upon a different meaning' (L. Oppenheim, *International Law*, ed. H. Lauterpacht, 8th ed. (London, 1955), i. 954-5).

<sup>2</sup> The following account necessarily draws largely on the British official history of the revolt in Iraq in Playfair, ii, ch. 9.

miles south of Baghdad, to move to Habbaniya, the British air base. These forces, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Fahmi Sa'id, stationed themselves on the plateau overlooking Habbaniya the next day. The British Ambassador protested against this action, but was told that it was merely a 'precautionary measure' and was referred to the previous Iraqi note concerning the disembarkation of troops at Basra and their movement through Iraq. Meanwhile British and American women and children were advised to leave Baghdad, while British and American men were asked to assemble outside the British Embassy or the American Legation.

The Habbaniya base, consisting of a flying training school, an aircraft depot, and a supply depot, was primarily used for training. Since the beginning of April preparations had been made in case of hostilities: flights and practice bombing were carried out and towards the end of the month a few planes had arrived and about 300 British infantry were flown up from Basra to reinforce the normal population at the base (about 1,000 airmen, some 1,200 Iraqi and Assyrian levies, and some 9,000 civilians). This small force, without artillery, was now threatened by a hostile force that by 1 May was up to approximately a brigade in strength. On that date the Iraqi Command sent a message to the British Air Officer Commanding (Air Vice-Marshal Smart) demanding that all flying should cease and that no one should leave the cantonment. The A.O.C. sent a firm reply stating that any interference with the normal training carried out at Habbaniya would be treated as an act of war. Further messages exchanged between the two commands were unsuccessful in persuading the Iraqi force to move, and Cornwallis informed the Foreign Office that he regarded the Iraqi threat to Habbaniya as an act of war which justified immediate counter-action by air. The reply gave the Ambassador full authority to take any steps necessary, including air attack, to ensure the withdrawal of the Iraqi forces. Smart therefore decided to attack at dawn on 2 May without issuing an ultimatum, before the Iraqi forces could take the initiative.<sup>1</sup> At dawn the following day all the available aircraft began their attack punctually at 5 a.m. The Iraqi forces replied with anti-aircraft guns and began to shell Habbaniya. 'Their real danger', says Guedalla, 'came from shelling. The bombard-

<sup>1</sup> 'The reason for this was that any warning of his intentions might encourage the investing force to forestall the attack and shell the station, which might prevent the Royal Air Force from using their bomber aircraft—their sole weapons of offence' (Playfair, ii. 183).

ment, which might so easily have been conclusive, seemed to lack direction. No German hand was there to guide.<sup>2</sup> Fighting continued all day, but the Iraqi forces showed no signs of withdrawing. Judging, however, that a determined assault on the camp was unlikely, the A.O.C. felt able the next day to attack the Iraqi air force, stationed at Rashid airfield, and the road to Baghdad, as well as gun positions and vehicles on and around the Habbaniya plateau. Bombing continued till 5 May. The Iraqi forces, lacking adequate air power, suffered greatly from the bombing and had to retreat to Falluja at dawn on 6 May, leaving behind large quantities of arms and equipment. Reinforcements seen moving up from Falluja were bombed and turned back, leaving 12 officers and 300 men prisoners. Iraqi aircraft made three unsuccessful attacks on Habbaniya.

When fighting began on 2 May the Rashid Ali Government sent a polite but firm note to the British Embassy recapitulating the whole controversy over the interpretation of the treaty. The note drew the attention of the Embassy to its responsibility for the attack on the Iraqi forces and asked that the dispute be referred to London for reconsideration. It appears that Rashid Ali was alarmed now that the dispute had developed into armed conflict; but the Four Colonels and the pan-Arab group, encouraged by British reverses in Greece, North Africa, and Crete, thought that the time had come to give the final blow to British influence in Iraq. They were counting on immediate German help, but could not foresee that their resistance might be broken before German support arrived.

Rashid Ali broke the news of the conflict with Britain in an official statement on the evening of 2 May, declaring that, despite all efforts made to avoid fighting, the British forces had attacked the Iraqi garrison in the neighbourhood of Habbaniya.

We were forced [stated the official announcement] to take defensive measures and the military operations which have begun are continuing with success to our army. The noble Iraqi nation is requested to remain quiet, proving its political maturity and confidence in the national forces. The people are requested never to attack foreigners amongst us, who will be regarded as our guests.<sup>3</sup>

Rashid Ali instructed his extremist supporters to agitate against Britain in the press and radio in the most extreme terms.<sup>3</sup> A few

<sup>2</sup> Philip Guedalla, *Middle East, 1940-1942* (London, 1944), p. 140.

<sup>3</sup> See text in *al-Bilad*, 3 May 1941.

<sup>3</sup> See *ibid.* 3 May 1941; *al-Istiqlal*, 5 and 25 May 1941.



prominent Iraqis, such as the poet Rusafi and the writer Fahmi al-Mudarris, who had retired from public life, reappeared to denounce British 'aggression' in Iraq.<sup>1</sup> Mustafa al-Wakil, Vice-President of the Misr al-Fatat (Young Egypt) Society—who was then visiting Professor at the Baghdad Higher Teachers' College—and Siddiq Shanshal, Rashid Ali's Director of Propaganda, were probably the most violent in their anti-British broadcasts.<sup>2</sup> The Mufti of Jerusalem, who had preferred to influence the course of events from behind the scenes during his stay in Baghdad, suddenly emerged to arouse public opinion against Britain throughout the Muslim world. In a speech broadcast on 9 May he declared a *jihad* (holy war) and invited every able-bodied Muslim to take part in the war against 'the greatest foe of Islam'.<sup>3</sup> There was no formal declaration of war on either side.

On the same day on which the hostilities began the British Defence Committee declared that Iraq should again come within the Middle East Command (at the time of the landing of the brigade at Basra it had been transferred to the Commander-in-Chief, India), and Wavell was invited to send all possible help to Smart. With five campaigns on his hands at the same time and his forces 'stretched to the limit everywhere', Wavell advised negotiating with the Iraqi Government instead, but later on the same day (2 May) he agreed that he would 'do what he could to create the impression that a large force was being prepared for action from Palestine'.<sup>4</sup> This force, comprising one mechanized brigade, one infantry battalion, and the greater part of a field artillery regiment, with an Arab contingent, was known as Habforce. In Wavell's opinion it was too little and too late; its departure from Palestine might give trouble there too; and it would also deprive him of his only means of intervening in Syria. He advised acceptance of the Turkish offer of mediation,<sup>5</sup> but the Chiefs of Staff considered that there could be no question of accepting Turkish mediation: it was essential to restore the situation at Habbaniya, and they believed that the Iraqis had taken action 'before their German friends were ready and should not be regarded as formidable'.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fahmi al-Mudarris, 'Iraq's [Choice] between Death and Free Life', *al-Bilad*, 16 May 1941.

<sup>2</sup> See Shanshal's first broadcast in *ibid.* 3 May 1941 and Wakil's broadcast in *ibid.* 5 May 1941.

<sup>3</sup> For the text of the speech see *al-Istiqlal* and *al-Liwa*, 9 May 1941 (trans. in *Oriente Moderno*, vol. 31, pp. 552-3).

<sup>4</sup> Playfair, ii. 185.

<sup>5</sup> See pp. 227-9 below. For the correspondence between Wavell, the Chiefs of Staff, and Churchill, see Churchill, iii. 228-9.

<sup>6</sup> Butler, *Grand Strategy*, ii. 462.

In the meantime Smart was told that help was coming and that it was his duty to defend Habbaniya to the last. By 6 May the Iraqi forces had withdrawn from the plateau overlooking Habbaniya, and Smart, asking for a guide to future policy, reported that he intended to concentrate on destroying the Iraqi force. The main body of Habforce (under Major-General J. W. G. Clark) would re-establish and hold the line of communication, while a flying column (Kingcol) was to be sent across the desert to reach Habbaniya as soon as possible. The Chiefs of Staff replied on 7 May that it was essential to continue to hit the Iraqi forces hard by every means not involving direct attack upon the civil population.<sup>1</sup> The object was 'to safeguard ourselves against Axis intervention in Iraq, and to this end we should defeat and discredit the leaders in the hope that Rashid's Government would be replaced. We should also occupy key points to prevent any help the Axis might send from being effective.'<sup>2</sup>

While Habforce, with its spearhead Kingcol, were being assembled in Palestine, action was taken to capture Rutba—defended by Colonel Fawzi al-Qawuqchi with a small police force—the point at which the road ceased to run alongside the Haifa branch of the oil pipeline and struck off eastward, and the last point at which water could be found for certain. It was bombed on 9 May and taken by a detachment of an R.A.F. armoured car company on the 11th.

Kingcol, under Brigadier J. J. Kingstone, crossed the Iraqi frontier on 13 May and approached Habbaniya from the south, avoiding Ramadi, where there was an Iraqi garrison. It was attacked by a German plane on the 15th. Guided by General Glubb's Arab Legion it arrived in the Habbaniya lake area on the 18th. Meanwhile the R.A.F. at Habbaniya had virtually eliminated the Iraqi air force, but from 12 May was attacked by German fighters based on Syria. On the 14th the Chiefs of Staff gave permission for the R.A.F. to attack German aircraft on Syrian airfields, 'fully realizing that this might mean French aircraft being attacked too'.<sup>3</sup> On 18 May—the same

<sup>1</sup> When Wellington bombers dropped leaflets over Baghdad on 4 May the Iraqi Foreign Office sent a note to the British Embassy in which it was pointed out that the leaflets contained a threat to the Government offices in Baghdad to the effect that these offices would be bombed unless the Iraqi forces were withdrawn from Habbaniya within four hours. The Iraqi note threatened that if the Government offices were bombed, the Iraqi forces would bomb the British Embassy. Cornwallis, who had advised the British military authorities not to bomb any but military targets, sent a telegram to the Middle East Command, calling attention to this earlier communication of his.

<sup>2</sup> Playfair, ii. 186.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

day as the arrival of Kingcol—Air Vice-Marshal D'Albiac arrived at Habbaniya to take command of the R.A.F., Smart having been injured in a motor accident. He was joined by Clark and they found that an attack on Falluja was about to be made by the Habbaniya garrison. Floods made the assembly and progress of troops very difficult, but Falluja was captured on 19 May, the only immediate reaction coming from German aircraft which bombed and machine-gunned Habbaniya airfield. The Iraqis made two determined but unsuccessful bids to retake Falluja. Iraqi reserves which were on their way to relieve it were attacked and dispersed. This marked the beginning of the disintegration of the Four Colonels' strategy. The only hope for them was in quick Axis support.

The road to Baghdad now lay open before the British forces and Clark decided upon a double advance, avoiding the approach from the south as this passed through the holy city of Karbala. Kingstone was to push along the main road while another column, guided by the Arab Legion, was to make a detour to the north. Glubb toyed with the idea of raising a revolt against Rashid Ali in northern Iraq and attempted to cut the railway along the Tigris to prevent Rashid Ali from moving his headquarters to Mosul; in one raid he captured the Mutasarrif of Baghdad, Jalal Khalid, but released him.<sup>1</sup> Owing to the floods it took Kingstone's force nine days to cover the bare thirty miles along the main road to Baghdad; all vehicles had to be got across improvised ferries and were attacked by German aircraft. On 28 May this column was held up about twelve miles from Baghdad but overcame the opposition and resumed the advance, only to be held up again on the 30th short of the Washshash Canal. In the meanwhile the northern column, after meeting slight opposition at Taji, was checked at Kadhimain, a sacred place which might not be bombed. The situation did not seem entirely satisfactory to Clark, with German air attacks on Habbaniya increasing, no reinforcements within reach, and some vulnerable points on the British supply line, but the Iraqi position was much worse, for the arrival of Kingcol had given rise to fantastic rumours of British strength. On the evening of 30 May Clark, to his great relief, learned that Rashid Ali and his chief supporters had crossed the Persian frontier, the only way of

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion* (London, 1948), pp. 280, 290-1. In an interview with the writer, Khalid stated that in a rash action he was engaged with Glubb's forces and was captured. Glubb, however, treated him well and sent him home.

escape open to them. The only person who did not accompany Rashid Ali was Yunis as-Sab'awi, Minister of Economics, who proclaimed himself Military Governor of Baghdad but within a few hours was forced to leave the capital with Rashid Ali's rump Government.

On 29 May a Committee of Internal Security was organized under Arshad al-'Umari, Mayor of Baghdad, with a view to negotiating an armistice. Arshad asked to see Cornwallis on 30 May and went there with Lieut.-Colonel Nur ad-Din Mahmud, the newly appointed Acting Chief of Staff. He asked for an armistice, the terms of which were drawn up by Clark and D'Albiac. Arshad suggested certain changes in order to make the armistice appear to result from mutual agreement, but Cornwallis said he had no authority to alter the text. The Iraqi delegation had no choice but to sign it. The terms of the armistice, which also included a preamble assuring the independence of Iraq, were as follows:

1. All hostilities between the two armies will cease forthwith.
2. The Iraq Army will be permitted to retain all its arms, equipment and munitions, but all units of the Army must proceed forthwith to their normal peace-time stations.
3. All British prisoners of war, either military, Royal Air Force or civilians, will be released forthwith.
4. All enemy (German or Italian) service personnel will be interned and their war material will be retained by the Iraq Government pending further instructions.
5. The town and vicinity of Ramadi to be vacated by the Iraq Army by 1200 hours, June 1st.
6. All facilities will be accorded immediately to the British military authorities for unimpeded through communication by rail, road and river.
7. All Iraqi prisoners of war now in the hands of the British will be handed over to His Highness the Regent as soon as the terms of the above-mentioned paragraphs have been duly complied with.<sup>1</sup>

#### TURKEY'S MEDIATION

The outbreak of hostilities between Iraq and Britain aroused grave concern in certain neighbouring countries, especially Turkey, lest Iraq should become an outpost of German influence and lest Turkey might be prevented from receiving valuable material shipped from Britain via the Persian Gulf. Moreover the extension of German influence to Iraq would bring the danger of war nearer to Saudi Arabia

<sup>1</sup> Playfair, ii. 332.



and threaten Egypt, then under Axis attack from the Western Desert, from the east also.

On 4 May 1941 Turkey offered her good offices in order to bring the war to an end. Britain insisted on the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Habbaniya before any discussions could take place;<sup>1</sup> the Iraqi Government, although accepting the offer of mediation in principle, did not withdraw the troops but decided to send Naji Shawkat, Minister of Defence, to Ankara to discuss the terms of the mediation. Shawkat arrived on 8 May and had three long conversations with Sarajoglu, the Turkish Foreign Minister, who advised that Iraq should accept mediation on the following terms:

1. Cessation of hostilities;
2. Britain to recognize the Rashid Ali Government;
3. Iraq to fulfil her treaty obligations to Britain by providing facilities for British forces, and negotiations to be resumed for permitting Britain to send forces to Iraq;
4. The existence of British forces in Iraq should not violate the independence and sovereignty of Iraq.<sup>2</sup>

In communicating these conditions to his Government, Shawkat advised their acceptance. After consulting his ministers Rashid Ali was willing to accept the conditions, but the Four Colonels, counting on Axis support, refused, and Sabbagh threatened to shoot Rashid Ali, who in turn threatened to resign. However the Mufti intervened and mended the differences by reminding the leaders of the regime of their duty to fulfil the Arab mission. Sabbagh assured the Cabinet that Iraq was able to hold out against the British forces for over three months until Axis support should arrive.<sup>3</sup>

Egypt and Saudi Arabia advised Rashid Ali to reconcile his differences with Britain. Naji as-Suwaydi, Minister of Finance, was sent to negotiate with Ibn Sa'ud for help, but Sa'ud replied that 'the only course open to the Arab nations was to support Great Britain'.<sup>4</sup>

The Iraqi Minister in Ankara was in constant touch with the Soviet Embassy; it will be recalled that he had tried to secure Soviet recogni-

<sup>1</sup> See Eden's speech in the House of Commons on 6 May (H.C. Deb., vol. 371, col. 737).

<sup>2</sup> Information supplied by Naji Shawkat; memoirs of Ali Mahmud, Minister of Justice under Rashid Ali (unpublished MS.); cf. Haddad, *Memoirs*, pp. 119-20.

<sup>3</sup> Haddad, *Memoirs*, p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> *The Times*, 19 May 1941; see also the account of Shaykh Hafiz Wahba, Saudi Minister to Great Britain, of Suwaydi's conversations with Ibn Sa'ud in K. S. Twitchell, *Saudi Arabia* (Princeton, 1958), pp. 106-7.

tion for Arab national aspirations since 1940, but the Soviet Government refused to commit itself. When in May 1941 the Iraqi Government again proposed diplomatic relations, this time without conditions, the Soviet Union responded favourably. Rashid Ali's action was prompted by his urgent need for support from any foreign Power. The Soviet response, which was by no means satisfactory to the Axis Powers, was dictated by her willingness to establish relations with any Arab country regardless of the approval of the Axis Powers.

#### AXIS SUPPORT FOR RASHID 'ALI

On the outbreak of hostilities in Iraq the German and Italian radio stations, which had long been successfully arousing Arab opinion against England, declared that Rashid Ali had raised the standard of freedom against British imperialism and promised immediate Axis support. The profuse Axis propaganda in support of Rashid Ali gave the impression that he had a prior understanding with Germany concerning the revolt against Britain; he was accordingly labelled as an oriental quisling in the British press.<sup>1</sup> But although Rashid Ali and the Mufti had been active in conducting negotiations with the Axis Powers, no definite agreement had been reached as to when hostilities against Britain should begin. A German-Italian note, dated 8 April, which was sent to Iraq merely stated that hostilities should begin when the balance of forces was favourable. When Rashid Ali's air force was destroyed by the R.A.F. and he failed to persuade the Four Colonels to accept mediation, he appealed to Germany for military help on the basis of prior German and Italian encouragement to raise a revolt against Britain. The Iraqi Government tried to get into contact with the German Foreign Office by means of a radio which was sent to Baghdad in April; but the Mufti's Secretary, who had been instructed in Vienna how to use and repair the radio, forgot the instructions on his return to Baghdad. He therefore suggested that the Iraqi Minister in Ankara should be asked to request von Papen for assistance.

In the meantime Naji Shawkat was also instructed to request von Papen for military assistance; in fact he was suspected of being less interested in discussing mediation with Turkey than in making contact with Germany.<sup>2</sup> When Shawkat had arrived in Ankara von Papen

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 19 May 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 12 May 1941. Shawkat pointed out to the writer that he had contacted von Papen only after his failure to secure agreement on mediation.

was in Germany, but before his return to Turkey he saw Hitler at Salzburg and discussed assistance for Iraq with him on 13 May. Von Papen intimated to Shawkat that the Iraqi revolt was premature and that Germany was too busy elsewhere, especially in Crete, to send substantial help.<sup>1</sup> The fact that Hitler was preparing an onslaught against the Soviet Union rather than contemplating a drive in the Middle East sealed the fate of Rashid Ali's regime. Shawkat returned to Baghdad on 18 May. His report to Rashid Ali was not encouraging and he advised an understanding with Britain, but the Four Colonels, denouncing him as a traitor, insisted on carrying on the war to the end. Disgusted with the group of army officers, Shawkat, though old and worn out from his recent trip, decided to dissociate himself from the cause for which he had worked so assiduously.<sup>2</sup>

Though the Iraqi revolt was regarded as premature, the Axis Powers did not lose sight of its importance in the general war against Britain. When von Papen saw Hitler at Salzburg he was instructed to 'endeavour to obtain from the Turks permission for the secret passage of arms for Iraq through Turkish territory'.<sup>3</sup> The Germans also needed the use of transit facilities and airfields in Syria, and to obtain these Hitler instructed Otto Abetz, the German Ambassador in Paris, to put pressure on Admiral Darlan, whose position had become insecure owing to Laval's intrigues. Darlan was invited to Paris to confer with Abetz on 3 May and 'promised everything', i.e. to make available to the rebels stores of munitions, including planes, stocked in Syria, to aid in the transport of further supplies across Syria and in refuelling and repairing German planes in transit, and to put at their disposal an airfield in north-east Syria.<sup>4</sup> This verbal agreement was given formal confirmation in one of the three Paris Protocols of 27 May whereby, in return for certain vague promises, Darlan agreed to make available to the Iraqis three-quarters of the munitions stocked in Syria, to facilitate the staging and supply of German planes passing over Syria, to provide the Germans with an air base at Aleppo, and to put the use of ports, roads, and railways at their dis-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. von Papen's *Memoirs*, p. 476.

<sup>2</sup> Information supplied to the writer by Shawkat.

<sup>3</sup> Office of U.S. Chief Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (Washington, 1946), iv. 501; see also von Papen, *Memoirs*, pp. 476-7. Von Papen succeeded in persuading Turkey to allow a train-load of fuel from Rumania to pass through Turkish territory (Haddad's *Memoirs*, pp. 116-17, and information supplied by the Acting Director of Petroleum Affairs in Iraq in 1941).

<sup>4</sup> William L. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (New York, 1947), p. 148.

posal.<sup>1</sup> The Germans appointed Rudolf Rahn to organize the supply of arms from Syria and on 6 May Grobba was instructed to go to Baghdad. In the meantime, on 4 May, Vichy instructed General Dentz, High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief of the French forces in the Levant, that if German planes arrived in Syria he should remember that France was a neutral Power in relation to Germany.<sup>2</sup> Owing to a delay Grobba did not arrive in Baghdad until 10 May, carrying gold and promises of military assistance, but this was already too late to raise the morale of Rashid Ali and his army officers, whose spirit of resistance had been broken. On 11 May the first German air reinforcements, consisting of three aircraft on a reconnaissance mission under Major Axel von Blomberg, a son of the Field-Marshal, arrived in Baghdad, but unfortunately Blomberg was accidentally killed when he was landing.<sup>3</sup> However, a plan was made to set up a *Fliegerführer* in Iraq with an initial force of 14 fighters and 7 bombers, with their main base at Rhodes.<sup>4</sup> At a meeting on 12 May, attended by the Mufti and leading army officers, Grobba proposed that he should request the Germans to send General Felmy as military adviser to the Iraqi Government. Sabbagh, sensitive about his own position, said that this was precisely what the British had wanted to do (in connexion with the Treaty of 1930). Grobba replied that Felmy would only have German troops under his command. The Mufti endorsed this suggestion and Grobba transmitted the request to the Foreign Office.

At a meeting held in Rome on 13 May between von Ribbentrop and Mussolini, in the presence of Ciano, the situation in Iraq was discussed among other things. Von Ribbentrop reported the terms of the Abetz-Darlan agreement to Mussolini, adding:

Should a large-scale transport of arms reach Iraq it would be possible to move airborne troops into the regions, who could then advance against the

<sup>1</sup> For text see below, Appendix V, p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> Geo London, *L'Amiral Estéva et le général Dentz devant la Haute Cour de Justice* (Lyons, 1945), p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> Grobba, in an interview with the writer, claimed that an official investigation determined that the shot had come from above. He stated that after the plane landed he inspected it and observed in the upper part of the pilot's cockpit the path of a shot which ran diagonally to the place where Blomberg's head had been. On the other hand Rahn stated that the Iraqis had not been advised of the arrival of the German planes and that an Iraqi soldier, believing that Blomberg was an Englishman, shot him in the throat (Rudolf Rahn, *Ruheloses Leben* (Düsseldorf, 1949), p. 162; Haddad's *Memoirs*, p. 114).

<sup>4</sup> Playfair, ii. 195.



British with the material found there and who could, under certain circumstances, attack Egypt from the East from Iraq.<sup>1</sup>

Mussolini, whose vain ambition it was to control the entire Mediterranean, showed great interest in the Rashid Ali revolt and urged immediate assistance. He gave his own views on the situation as follows:

- (1) One must definitely help Iraq, as a new front against the British would be created in this way and the indignation, not only of the Arabs, but also of the great number of Moslems would be aroused. Already the Grand Mufti had summoned the Arabs of the world to a holy war against England. . . .
- (2) It would be necessary to get possession of Crete and Cyprus (the 'anteroom' of Syria). If one could then obtain, from the French, permission to land troops and planes in Syria, the Axis powers' help to Iraq could be very substantial. The Italians had already prepared five planes, which would proceed to Baghdad via Rhodes, in order to transport there 400 machine-guns, as well as 20 anti-tank guns. In addition, 12 fighter planes were ready for action. Should the passage of arms through Turkey prove impossible, one would have to march against England from Syria. The great advantage here lay in the 100 km. stretch of desert which had to be overcome in the event of an attack on Egypt from Syria, as compared with the 500 km. stretch of desert in the case of an attack on Egypt from the West.<sup>2</sup>

When asked by von Ribbentrop how long Iraq would be able to hold out against Britain, Mussolini replied that 'the Head of the Iraq Government had declared that he could hold his own against the British, provided only he received some war material. If, however, he received no aid, opposition would . . . be removed by the British in 3 or 4 weeks.' Mussolini, however, wondered whether the Gaullist movement in Syria would not put some difficulties in the way of French assistance. Von Ribbentrop replied that 'Darlan appeared convinced that he could carry out the business in Syria as planned'.

The first trainload of German arms from Aleppo, escorted by Rahn in person, reached Mosul on 13 May<sup>3</sup> and on the same day Grobba, with Colonel Qasim Maqsud, officer commanding the Mosul Forces, signed a three-year agreement with Rahn arranging for payment for the arms. Rashid Ali approved the agreement and shipped two trains of wheat, rice, sugar, and oil to Syria. In all, four trainloads

<sup>1</sup> *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, iv. 501-2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 502.

<sup>3</sup> Rahn, *Ruheloses Leben*, p. 166.

of arms got through before a bridge near Tel Kotchek was blown up, putting an end to rail traffic. The British Government called the attention of Turkey to this passage of arms, but apparently Turkey acted partly from German pressure and partly from fear that Iraq might retaliate by preventing supplies of arms sent by Britain through the Persian Gulf and Iraq.<sup>1</sup> German aircraft began to attack Habbaniya on 16 May, bombed it again on 20 May with considerable success, and thereafter repeated their attacks with the loss of five bombers and eleven fighters.<sup>2</sup> The number of German aircraft that crossed into Iraq was estimated at about thirty,<sup>3</sup> but so far as the writer has been able to ascertain, the actual number can hardly have exceeded twenty-three.<sup>4</sup> On 17 May came news of the advance of Kingcol and on the 20th of the crossing at Falluja. Thus when Hitler issued his Directive No. 30 embodying his formal policy towards Iraq and declaring that 'The Arab Liberation Movement is our natural ally against Great Britain in the Middle East',<sup>5</sup> the Iraqi cause was virtually lost and most of the provisions of the Order were out of date. On the 26th Mussolini was moved to suggest that they ought to decide whether the Axis help was to be symbolic or effective; if the former, it were best to admit it in good time; if the latter, the capture of Cyprus should follow that of Crete.<sup>6</sup> On the 27th, at the German suggestion, twelve Italian fighters arrived at Mosul but had not even time to go into action before hostilities ended. On the 29th some additional German aircraft destined for Mosul were countermanded owing to lack of fuel in Iraq; nevertheless Grobba, in discussing the situation with Rashid Ali, was then still hopeful that sufficient German support would be forthcoming and suggested moving the capital to Mosul. By then, however, the collapse of the Rashid Ali regime was complete, and Grobba and the German airmen left Iraq in a panic. General Felmy did not arrive in Aleppo until 1 June, two days after the armistice had been signed.

News of Darlan's agreement to allow Germany facilities in Syria caused grave concern in the United States, which made representa-

<sup>1</sup> 'Ribbentrop was bombarding me with telegrams', says von Papen in his *Memoirs*, 'insisting that I get the Turks to permit the passage of every sort of war material [to Iraq]. Naturally, they declined, although they did allow the transport of petrol, which could not be defined exclusively as war material' (p. 477).

<sup>2</sup> Denis Richards, *The Royal Air Force* (London, 1953), i. 320-1; Buckley, *Five Ventures*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 17 May 1941.

<sup>4</sup> Only seven were in operation at any one time; all in all some twenty flights were sent, of which seven were reconnaissance ones.

<sup>5</sup> Text in Playfair, ii. 333.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

tions to Vichy through Admiral Leahy, American Ambassador, on 13 May when Pétain denied that he knew what Darlan had accomplished but promised 'in no event to give any voluntary active military aid to Germany'.<sup>1</sup> On 16 May Eden declared in the House of Commons that the French Government could not escape responsibility for allowing German aircraft to use Syrian aerodromes as staging posts for flights to Iraq and denounced their action 'under German orders' in permitting these flights as 'a clear breach of the armistice terms'.<sup>2</sup> The French National Committee in London repudiated the action of the Vichy Government as an 'act of treason'.<sup>3</sup>

#### REFLECTIONS ON THE REVOLT

Speaking at Bloemfontein in 1943 on the turning-point in the war, General Smuts thought that if Hitler had launched his attack on Russia through Syria and Iraq, concurrently with his attack from the west, the outcome of the war would have been different. 'Who prevented this?' asked General Smuts. 'Greece! Those precious six weeks altered the history of the world. They gave us time to get hold of Syria and save Iraq from rebellion.'

Reflecting on the events in Iraq after their occurrence, writers and strategists have been inclined to agree that Hitler, by directly attacking Russia before gaining control of the Middle East, committed a strategic error. With the pan-Arab group ready to collaborate with him, Hitler lost the prize of the Middle East for little cost. But it was not only Greece that prevented that. The landing of British troops at Basra in April 1941 was timely. It forced the Four Colonels, against the advice of Rashid Ali, into premature action. Hitler might have sent a strong airborne force to Iraq, but he had already made his decision to employ his forces in another direction. With a few thousand German troops and a few hundred aircraft, in the guise of helping a nationalist movement, Hitler's hand might have stretched to India.

But the Four Colonels' timing of their action did not coincide with Hitler's. British military action, on the other hand, was boldly carried out before the Iraqi force either had time to be reorganized or receive adequate foreign assistance. Turkish mediation, which might have given the Four Colonels a respite, was not accepted.

Militarily the Iraqi army was not adequately supplied with weapons

<sup>1</sup> Hull, *Memoirs*, ii. 958.

<sup>2</sup> H.C. Deb., vol. 371, col. 1264.

<sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 17 May 1941.

and aircraft to enter into a conflict with Britain. Nor had the Four Colonels sufficient military experience to lead the army into war with a power far superior in strategy and resources. The Four Colonels, therefore, should at least have taken advantage of the strategic position they gained when they placed their forces on the plateau overlooking Habbaniya and attacked at once before the British force was ready to defend itself; instead, the officer commanding the Iraqi force waited until he was attacked, thus permitting the British force to take the initiative, and was forced himself to take the defensive. A less serious cause was the morale in the Iraqi army which was very high at the beginning, but which soon fell when both the officers and the troops discovered that they had been deceived by the Four Colonels since the Axis Powers failed to send substantial quantities of weapons and aircraft which they badly needed.

The British 'intervention' has been viewed differently by various writers; some have regarded it as an act that saved Iraq from German occupation and from identification with the losing side in the war;<sup>1</sup> others as a means of getting rid of the leading army officers who controlled the political process; and still others as a check on the nationalist demand that Britain should 'strain even further in the Arabs' favour the precarious compromise imposed by the Palestine White Paper of 1939.<sup>2</sup> The pan-Arabs have often referred to the British 'intervention' as the 'second British occupation', but a few moderate Iraqi nationalists regarded it as an 'episode' dictated by war conditions. The writer has expressed the opinion that in the light of subsequent events a political settlement with the nationalists 'might have proved more beneficial for future friendship and cooperation between Great Britain and the Middle Eastern countries'.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE FATE OF RASHID 'ALI AND THE MUFTI

It is perhaps in order to relate here the story of the fate of Rashid Ali and his group after the collapse of their regime. After their flight from Baghdad on 29 May Rashid Ali's company (composed of Rashid Ali, the Mufti, the Four Colonels, and a few others) were welcomed in Tehran two days later. Some of them, such as the Mufti and Sab'awi, remained active and were in constant touch with the German, Italian, and Japanese Legations; others had become completely

<sup>1</sup> See S. H. Longrigg, *Iraq, 1900-1950* (London, 1953), p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> Kirk, *Middle East in the War*, p. 7, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The writer's review of Churchill's *Second World War*, vol. iii, in *The Middle East Journal*, vol. v (1951), p. 108.



frustrated and preferred to live in isolation. Colonel Kamil Shabib went so far as to turn against his colleagues and wrote to his friends in Baghdad requesting pardon. When Persia was occupied by British and Russian forces their hope of a quick Axis drive into the Middle East vanished and they began to look for another country of refuge.

Rashid Ali and the Mufti applied for admission to Turkey as political refugees, but the Turkish Government refused the Mufti's request and accepted only Rashid Ali's. Rashid therefore left for Istanbul in August via Tabriz, Erzerum, and Ankara. Some of the pan-Arab leaders (such as Adil and Nabih al-Azma, Majid and Adil Arslam, Rasim al-Khalidi, and several others) who could escape from Persia followed Rashid Ali to Turkey. They held a conference late in October in which it was decided that their struggle to achieve the pan-Arab mission should be continued in collaboration with the Axis Powers since the war against the common enemy was being fought in other directions.<sup>1</sup> Rashid Ali tried to proceed to Germany, but he was refused an exit permit. Through the assistance of Dr Paul Schmidt, Reich Press Chief, he was taken to Berlin by air on 20 November with a forged passport. Before this the Mufti, in disguise, passed through Istanbul after he had escaped from the Japanese Legation in Tehran on hearing that the Persian authorities were searching for him and his company. He arrived shortly after the decision taken by the pan-Arabs to entrust Rashid Ali with the task of being their official spokesman in the forthcoming negotiations with Germany. This seems to have marked the beginning of the rift between the two Arab leaders which became serious during their exile in Axis lands.

The rest of the pan-Arab leaders in Tehran, except Sabbagh who disappeared, were suddenly arrested late in August before they had time to escape. General Amin Zaki, Acting Chief of the General Staff, the other three Colonels (Fahmi Sa'id, Mahmud Salman, and Kamil Shabib), Suwaydi, Sab'awi, and all others who could not escape, were handed over to the British authorities and were interned in Rhodesia for the duration of the war.<sup>2</sup> On 6 January 1942 an Iraqi court martial passed death sentences *in absentia* on Rashid Ali, Ali Mahmud,

<sup>1</sup> The Arab wishes were those which were already communicated to Germany from Baghdad in August 1940. These were reaffirmed as the basis for the collaboration of the pan-Arab leaders with the Axis Powers. (Information supplied by Rashid Ali and Rasim al-Khalidi.)

<sup>2</sup> Kamal Haddad, the Mufti's Secretary, was at first taken to Haifa to be questioned about the Mufti's movements before he was sent to Rhodesia. Suwaydi and Tamimi died in Rhodesia while in exile.

Yunis as-Sab'awi, Amin Zaki, and the Four Colonels (the death sentence on Amin Zaki, however, was commuted to hard labour for life on the grounds that his conduct was to a large extent dominated by the Four Colonels). Naji Shawkat and Siddiq Shanshal were sentenced to five years' imprisonment, and Dr Hasan Salman, Minister of Education (who hardly began work when he fell ill within a week and spent the rest of the time in hospital), for one year.<sup>1</sup>

When the British authorities in Rhodesia agreed to release those whom the Iraqi Government had tried *in absentia*, the sentences were reconsidered in order to permit the accused to defend themselves.<sup>2</sup> All except four (Fahmi Sa'id, Mahmud Salman, Yunis as-Sab'awi, and Ali Mahmud) pleaded that they did not join the Rashid Ali uprising of their own free will, that they were dissatisfied with the conduct of Rashid Ali and the leading army officers, and that they were not responsible for the consequences of the uprising. Sab'awi and Ali Mahmud presented the most impressive defence. Sab'awi argued that he was prompted to take an active part in a movement which was intended to free his country from foreign domination and that it was never meant to be directed against the powers of the Regent. Ali Mahmud showed considerable legal skill in arguing that while the court martial had passed death sentence on him in accordance with Article 80 of the Baghdad Penal Code, this article was applicable only to individuals who participated in an armed rebellion against the State. He argued that his purpose in participating in the Rashid Ali Government was to change the Cabinet and therefore it did not come under Article 80. He also took pains to demonstrate that the Rashid Ali Cabinet was not opposed to the Regent, but sought to limit the interference of Britain in the internal affairs of Iraq. At any rate, Mahmud argued, he should not have been released from internment by the Rhodesian authorities, and the British Government, after his arrest in Persia, should have refused to hand him over to the Iraqi Government since he was a political refugee.<sup>3</sup>

On 4 May 1942 the court martial passed the following sentences:

<sup>1</sup> Rashid Ali, Naji Shawkat, and Yunis as-Sab'awi were members of Parliament and enjoyed parliamentary immunity. In accordance with Art. 49 of the constitution, their membership had been terminated before the sentences were passed on them.

<sup>2</sup> Naji as-Suwaydi, who was sentenced to death like Rashid Ali and Sab'awi, was not released for retrial, perhaps in deference to his brother Tawfiq. It would have been embarrassing for the Iraqi Government if his trial had not resulted in a death sentence.

<sup>3</sup> Memoirs of Ali Mahmud (unpublished MS.), vol. iv.

death sentence on Fahmi Sa'id, Mahmud Salman, and Yunis as-Sab'awi (who were hanged on 5 May 1942),<sup>1</sup> seven years' imprisonment for Ali Mahmud and five for Amin Zaki. Siddiq Shanshal was acquitted (but he was subsequently taken to an internment camp). Kamil Shabib, handed over to the Iraq Government in April 1944, was sentenced to death on 16 August and hanged on the following day. Musa ash-Shabandar and Muhammad Ali Mahmud were sentenced to five years' imprisonment, beginning on 2 April. Sharif Sharaf was given three years, Ra'uf al-Bahrani two years, and Abd al-Qadir al-Gaylani three months' imprisonment. Naji Shawkat was in Turkey when the Rashid Ali regime collapsed, but he was subsequently captured in Italy by the British forces in July 1945, and was handed over to the Iraqi Government to serve his term of imprisonment. Colonel Sabbagh was able to escape first to Persia and then entered Turkey in April 1942 where he was captured and detained as a political refugee. In spite of repeated requests by the Iraqi Government, the Turkish Government refused to hand him over. He spent three years in Turkey, where he wrote his memoirs,<sup>2</sup> but when the war was over he was delivered to the British authorities in Syria in September 1945. He escaped for a few days in Aleppo, but was recaptured and sent to Baghdad. On 16 October he was hanged near the gate of the Ministry of Defence.

With the help of the Italian Counsellor in Istanbul the Mufti of Jerusalem escaped to Rome in disguise, and from there he went to Berlin, arriving on 6 November 1941. He was welcomed by the Nazi authorities, assigned a villa in a western suburb of Berlin, and given every possible assistance including adequate financial support. When Rashid Ali arrived shortly afterwards, at first he shared the Mufti's villa but was later provided with a separate residence. Soon afterwards Rashid was joined by Naji Shawkat, Kamil al-Gaylani (Rashid's brother), Muhammad Hasan as-Salman, and a few others of his followers. Von Ribbentrop commissioned Grobba to look after the Arab leaders and to act as a liaison officer.

<sup>1</sup> They were hanged early in the morning, at 2 a.m., but on the previous evening they were allowed to see their families. It is reported that Fahmi Sa'id kept silent, Sab'awi uttered a few words of complaint, and Mahmud Salman made a short speech in which he said: 'The foundation of a nation is always established on the corpses of its martyrs, and the foundation of the Iraqi nation would be established on these [i.e. our] corpses.' It is believed that Amir Abd al-Ilah and General Nuri witnessed this scene, in disguise, from a distance.

<sup>2</sup> The *Memoirs* were given by Sabbagh to one of his friends when he escaped in Aleppo and were subsequently published by his son in Damascus in 1956.

From the time they set foot in Axis lands, the two pan-Arab leaders failed to co-operate. Competition for leadership, as well as personal jealousies aroused by the vested interests of their entourages, prompted them to negotiate separately with the Axis authorities and each sought to secure recognition of leadership in activities in which he was personally most interested. Grobba, hoping that he might return to Baghdad as Ambassador with Rashid Ali as Prime Minister, sided with Rashid Ali.<sup>1</sup>

On 27 November the Mufti was received by von Ribbentrop. He pointed out that Arab support for the Axis Powers would be assured if the German Government would recognize the independence of the Arab countries. Von Ribbentrop agreed but told the Mufti to take up the matter with the Führer, whom he was going to see on the following day. Hitler received the Mufti, but when the Mufti repeated his request for a formal recognition of the independence of the Arab countries Hitler replied that he did not wish to make long-term promises. When the German forces approached the borders of the Arab countries, Hitler went on to say, then would be the opportune time to make such a declaration. Despite the Mufti's disappointment he assured Hitler of Arab friendship and their willingness to collaborate with Germany.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'The Mufti makes loud accusations against El Gailani', wrote Ciano in his diary. 'As was to be foreseen, the two quarrelled, and Grobba added fuel to the fire' (*Ciano's Diary 1939-1943*, ed. Malcolm Muggeridge (London, 1948), p. 491). See also Haddad's *Memoirs*, p. 28. In an interview with the writer on 18 May 1958 the Mufti pointed out that his differences with Rashid Ali were greatly exaggerated and that there was no disagreement between them over fundamental principles. Rashid Ali confirmed to the writer that the differences were mainly on precedence and leadership.

<sup>2</sup> See the Mufti's *Memoirs*. Von Ribbentrop, at the suggestion of the pan-Arab leaders, again put forward the Arab wish for a joint declaration at a meeting between Hitler and Mussolini (in the presence of von Ribbentrop and Count Ciano) at Schloss Klessheim near Salzburg on 29 Apr. 1942. Hitler, in stating that such a declaration was premature, gave the following reasons: 'A declaration of the sort described could only be effective from a military point of view if the troops of the Axis Powers stood south of the Caucasus. In such a case an uprising which might break out in the Arab areas as a result of such a declaration might be militarily useful and could be supported militarily. If, on the contrary, the declaration regarding Arabia were to be issued at the moment, there were two possibilities. On the one hand the Arabs might take no notice of it. In such a case, a declaration of that sort would be useless for the Axis. On the contrary it would even be harmful, since our enemies would conclude that the influence of the Axis Powers was declining in those areas. The other possibility was that the Arabs would take notice of the declaration and would commence an uprising, which under present conditions would be suppressed by the English, who would thus



On 16 December Rashid Ali was received by von Ribbentrop. Rashid asked for recognition of his position as the Iraqi Prime Minister. He was told that this recognition must be approved by the Führer, and when Hitler's approval was secured, von Ribbentrop gave a letter to this effect, dated 19 December 1941, to Rashid Ali, and expressed to him the hope that he would soon return to his position in Baghdad. It was, however, not until mid-July 1942 that Rashid Ali was officially received by Hitler at his military headquarters in Russian territory. Hitler praised the courage of the Iraqi people for their uprising against the British Empire and stated that Germany had no territorial ambition in Arab lands, and that he was prepared to issue a declaration to this effect at the appropriate time.

For his part the Mufti sought to secure a letter recognizing his leadership and urged von Ribbentrop to issue a letter recognizing the independence of the Arab countries. In January 1942 von Ribbentrop gave a letter to the Mufti stating that the German Government was willing to recognize the independence of the Arab countries when the Arabs had won it. The Mufti was more successful in securing a pledge from the Italian Government. To a joint letter presented by the Mufti and Rashid Ali, in which a specific reference to Palestine was requested, Count Ciano replied on 28 April:

Eminence:

In response to the letter sent today by you and by His Excellency, the President of the Council, Rashid Ali al-Gailani, and in confirmation of the conversations with you, I have the honour to communicate the following:

The Italian Government fully appreciates the confidence placed by the Arab people in the Axis Powers and in their objectives, as well as their intention of participating in the fight against the common enemy until final victory is achieved. This is in accord with the national aspirations, as conveyed by you, of the Arab countries of the Near East at present oppressed by the British. I have the honour to assure you, in full agreement with the German Government, that the independence and freedom of the Arab countries, now suffering under British oppression, are also the objectives of the Italian Government.

Italy is therefore ready to grant to the Arab countries in the Near East, capture the most effective exponents of an Arab policy friendly to the Axis and the Axis interests in Arabia would thereby suffer severe damage. Only if the Axis troops were south of the Caucasus could developments of this sort be prevented.' (See Schmidt's memorandum on this meeting in the Department of State *Bulletin*, 14 July 1946, pp. 61-62.)

now suffering under British oppression, every possible aid in their fight for liberation; to recognize their sovereignty and independence; to agree to their federation if this is desired by the interested parties; as well as to the abolition of the National Jewish Homeland in Palestine.

It is understood that the text and contents of this letter shall be held absolutely secret until such a time as we together decide otherwise.

Please accept, Eminence, the expression of my highest consideration.

While Rashid Ali led a relatively quiet life with his family, the Mufti, alone and restless, became very active. Far more astute and persuasive than Rashid, the Mufti was looked upon as the leader of the pan-Arab community in exile. Rashid often quarrelled with his own followers, including Naji Shawkat, whom he reproached for having left Iraq after the fall of Falluja. This accentuated the rift between Rashid Ali and the Mufti, who soon became the dominant figure in Arab affairs. As a religious leader who championed the cause of Islam, in addition to his pan-Arab activities, he exerted greater influence on personages such as von Weizsäcker in the Foreign Office and in particular on Himmler.<sup>1</sup> The Mufti carried on endless correspondence with Arab leaders in Europe such as Amir Chekib (Shakib) Arslan, and others in Asia and North Africa. The Mufti's influence may be said to have extended throughout the entire Muslim world. He also helped to organize an 'Arab Legion', the members of which were trained to carry out sabotage and subversive activities in the Arab countries;<sup>2</sup> and went on to help recruit Muslims in Yugoslavia who fought on the side of Hitler against their compatriots.<sup>3</sup> In Rome the Mufti was still more influential and was able to make a great impression on Mussolini and Ciano, who regarded him as the future leader of the Arab world.<sup>4</sup>

The shifting fortunes of Hitler must have greatly discouraged the two Arab leaders, and the continuous bombing of German and Italian cities forced them to limit their activities and seek refuge in places

<sup>1</sup> Ernst von Weizsäcker, *Erinnerungen* (Munich, 1950), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> See the Mufti's *Memoirs* and the two reports of the Defence Security Office of Iraq published in the American Christian Palestine Committee, *The Arab War Office* (New York, 1947), pp. 43-46.

<sup>3</sup> The Mufti's *Memoirs*, *ibid.*; and Pearlman, *The Mufti of Jerusalem* (London, 1947), pp. 57 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Since Palestine was regarded as falling in the Italian zone of influence, it was in the interest of Italy to cultivate the friendship of the Mufti and support his leadership over that of Rashid Ali. It is reported that the Mufti was invited to accompany Mussolini on his well-prepared plan to enter Cairo after Rommel would have won the battle of al-Alamayn.

unlikely to be bombed. During the latter days of the war both Rashid Ali and the Mufti moved quickly from one place to another, flying from the rapid advance of Western and Soviet forces. Disguised and unnoticed, they reached the Swiss border when the Armistice was signed on 7 May 1945. Rashid Ali was not admitted; the Mufti, who had already reached Berne, was told that he could not stay indefinitely in Switzerland and that he had to leave.

Rashid Ali went to Belgium where, still disguised, he was taken on board an American plane to Paris (where he spent about a month) and from there, undetected by the French authorities, went to Marseilles. About the middle of July he was able to escape, under the name and passport of Abd al-Qadir al-Maydani (an Arab from Damascus whom he had met during the war in Germany), to Beirut on board the French ship *Morocco*. Still disguised and undetected, he spent the month of August in Beirut before going to Damascus and thence to Riyadh where he suddenly appeared (after a trip of seventeen days in the desert) before the late King Abd al-Aziz ibn Sa'ud on 27 September asking for *dakhala* (asylum). From 1945 to 1954 Rashid Ali remained as the guest of the Saudi King. Neither Sa'ud's good offices nor petitions from Arab leaders helped to secure his pardon. Amir Abd al-Ilah, who had been roughly handled by Rashid Ali and the Four Colonels, was adamant in his determination not to forgive him or some of his principal supporters. Not until the revolt of 14 July 1958, which eliminated the Hashimite dynasty, were the gates of Iraq thrown open to Rashid Ali, who was officially welcomed upon his return to Baghdad after an absence of seventeen years.

The Mufti, no longer able to disguise himself after he was denied residence in Switzerland, was arrested by the French authorities upon reaching the French frontiers. He was taken to Paris where he resided in a guarded villa in a suburb. Although his movements were restricted, he was able to receive visitors and often visited Paris under police supervision. When he heard that his name had been mentioned as a possible war criminal at Nuremberg, he began to make preparations to escape. When the orders restricting his movements were relaxed, which he perhaps interpreted to mean that he could escape, he left Paris in disguise in May 1946, under the name and passport of Ma'ruf ad-Dawalibi, the well-known Syrian nationalist (who was then studying law in Paris), and went to Cairo via Rome and Athens on board an American military aircraft. In Cairo he was received as the guest of King Faruq, and remained there ever since although he

subsequently visited other Arab capitals. He had yet to play a significant role in the final chapter of the struggle for Palestine, in whose tragic end he participated, before his leadership suffered an eclipse. Nevertheless this may not yet be the end of the political career of this restless brain.



## CHAPTER X

### FROM WAR TO PEACE

THE Amir Abd al-Ilah, having failed to organize a resistance movement in Basra, left by air for Palestine and Transjordan where he spent three weeks before he returned to Iraq. He was accompanied by Nuri as-Sa'id, Ali Jawdat, and Midfa'i. In Jerusalem he made a statement repudiating the action of Rashid Ali and declared that the 'legitimate' authority of Iraq was ready to grant Britain the right of passage under the treaty. On 4 May 1941 he issued a proclamation to the people of Iraq in which he stated:

A group of military tyrants, aided and abetted by Rashid Ali and other ill-disposed persons bought by foreign gold, have by force thrust me from my sacred duties as guardian of my nephew, your beloved young King. Under their evil sway the noble land of Iraq has been poisoned by falsehood and lies and brought from the blessings of peace to the horrors of a venomous war.

My duty is plain. I am returning to restore the tarnished honour of our native land and to lead it back again to peaceful prosperity under a lawfully constituted Government.

I call upon all true sons of Iraq to drive out this band of traitors and restore to our beloved country true liberty and independence. Recall your sons and brothers from this war, brought upon your heads by the lies and intrigues of foreigners thinking only of their own selfish interests. O soldiers, go peacefully to your stations and there peacefully await my restoration of an independent Iraqi constitutional Government. Long live King Feisal II.<sup>1</sup>

When the tide of events turned against Rashid Ali, the Regent and his party returned to Iraq by way of the desert. They waited at Habbaniya for a week, where some 200 prisoners joined his party, until the Rashid Ali regime had completely collapsed. This move kept alive the hopes and aspirations of the moderate nationalists who, though they were not in favour of full collaboration with England, did not want to go to war with her. Soon after his arrival at Habbaniya, the Regent issued the following proclamation to the nation:

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 5 May 1941, p. 4.

I promised you in a previous proclamation that I was determined to return to Iraq to rescue and liberate the country from the disastrous war in which has been lost the lives of many innocent men, and which has rendered their children orphans in addition to causing heavy losses to property.

I now return to Iraq to co-operate with loyal men and the true representatives of the nation in order to restore peaceful life and heal the deep and bloody wounds caused by that tyrannic group to satisfy the wishes of the Axis Powers and in consideration of the money they received, and to drive out those who deliberately planned to make a battlefield of our country.

I trust that in the execution of this heavy task and in forming a new and better Government I shall have the assistance of every citizen of Iraq, not only of the officers of the Government and the army and the police, but also of the notables in the cities, the religious leaders, and the leaders of the tribes.<sup>1</sup>

After the armistice the Regent returned to the capital on 1 June 1941, welcomed only by the moderate elements among the Iraqi nationalists. But those elements who regretted the collapse of the Rashid Ali regime gave free vent to their feelings by making the Jewish community in Baghdad the scapegoat for their failure. Rioting and looting began in the streets of Baghdad in the afternoon of 1 June and continued spasmodically throughout the night. The next morning the situation became worse when tribesmen entered the city and took part in the looting. The riot was soon out of hand and a large number of Jewish shops and stores were destroyed and several hundred Jews were killed. The police, themselves resentful because of the collapse of the Rashid Ali regime, proved to be useless. Arshad al-'Umari, still nominally in control until a new Government was formed, urged the Director-General of Police to take drastic measures to stop disorder, but the Director-General pleaded that he could not accept responsibility for drastic measures. Thereupon the Regent issued orders, and troops with machine-guns put an end to the riots. Perhaps the absence of a responsible Government encouraged extremist elements to take advantage of the situation, although it is doubtful whether any Government could have been wholly successful in preventing the rioting.

#### MIDFA'I'S COMPROMISE GOVERNMENT

The rioting on 2 June compelled the Regent to speed up the formation of a Government. He was in a difficult position and seemingly

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* 27 May 1941, p. 4.

had returned to Iraq with no plan or thought as to who should form the Government. Midfa'i, a moderate nationalist acceptable to various shades of opinion, was the only candidate. His name had been put forward by Arshad al-'Umari, but Midfa'i was not anxious to fill a position just vacated by Rashid Ali, nor was the Regent enthusiastic, since he was dissatisfied with Midfa'i's attitude of late and sought to find a more energetic man who could deal firmly with the problems ahead. It was, however, difficult to find a man more suitable for the occasion than Midfa'i. When Midfa'i was finally approached, he at first refused and consented only after his friends (including Cornwallis) had urged him to accept the responsibility of power as a 'national duty'.

Midfa'i formed his Cabinet on 3 June, and was given considerable freedom in the choice of his colleagues. Ali Jawdat, a close friend and supporter, was given the portfolio of Foreign Affairs; Ibrahim Kamal, a member of Midfa'i's last Cabinet, was given Finance. The other members were: Mustafa al-'Umari for Interior, Nasrat al-Farisi for Economics, Shabibi for Education, Jalal Baban for Transportation and Public Works, Nazif ash-Shawi for Defence, and Ja'far Hamandi for Social Affairs. The Cabinet quickly set to work and a number of decrees were issued to deal with internal order, in particular the declaration of martial law (3 June) for the purpose of restoring order and inspiring confidence. Another decree, based on an advisory opinion of the Ministry of Justice, declared the Rashid Ali Government unconstitutional and its approval by Parliament void, since according to Article 40 of the constitution, the summoning of Parliament must be done by the King in an extraordinary session, and its summoning by a Vice-President was illegal.

By an agreement between Midfa'i and Cornwallis the dispute concerning the application of the Treaty of Alliance during the war was resolved, and on 5 June the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs sent a note to Cornwallis stating:

1. The Iraqi Government agree that for the duration of the war the British Government may station their ground and air forces at such places as may be deemed necessary for the defence of Iraq, subject to (a) the Iraqi Government being notified as far as possible, and (b) due consideration must be given to such observations as the Iraqi Government may make on account of local administrative necessities.

2. The Iraqi Government agree to establish a postal and telegraphic censorship and to safeguard the interests of the British Government in these

matters by employing in the department concerned a British official from among those in the service of the Iraqi Government.<sup>1</sup>

3. The Iraqi Government agree to the British military authorities exercising the necessary measures of control in co-operation with the Iraqi authorities over the base area at Basra and will issue orders to the Basra port authorities to co-operate fully concerning the measures necessary to facilitate and ensure the safe arrival of British forces at Basra.<sup>2</sup>

On 8 June diplomatic relations with Italy, which proved to be the most thorny problem in Anglo-Iraqi relations under Rashid Ali's premiership, were finally severed; thus the first step to reduce Axis influence in Iraqi politics was taken at last. Midfa'i, however, refrained from any actions that might be vindictive, and followed a policy of moderation which helped to pacify the country and restore order. In a speech which he made on 11 June, which was broadcast, Midfa'i appealed to the patriotism of the people. The text of the speech, which made a favourable impression, follows:

My brothers, people of Iraq,

It has often been my lot to take over the reins of responsibility at difficult periods. On this occasion I have formed a Government at the most critical period through which Iraq has ever passed. Our beloved country has been exposed to the greatest dangers in its history—dangers which threatened its very existence, integrity, and independence, had it not been for the wisdom of His Royal Highness the Regent, who did not hesitate to sacrifice his comfort and expose himself to the greatest dangers for the sake of preserving the country's integrity and constitution, and had it not been for the sincerity of some of the army leaders who remained at the head of their troops at the time of danger.

In the past the country has suffered from many difficulties and political intrigues, but by the grace of God it has always emerged from these troubles stronger and more respected than before. The events of the last month, however, were the most serious of all, as they were directed against the head of the State and the actual integrity of the country. They amounted to nothing less than a foul attempt on the part of fifth columnists to stir up trouble in our peace-loving country.

I am sorry to say that some adventurers did not hesitate to co-operate

<sup>1</sup> In a similar manner an agreement was reached concerning the control of aliens in Iraq.

<sup>2</sup> The British Chiefs of Staff expressed 'concern at the omission from the Armistice terms of any reference to the occupation of strategic points' by the British forces, and of any 'military safeguards'. The armistice was then regarded as 'lenient and brief' (Playfair, ii. 192-3). It was for these reasons that Cornwallis obtained the acceptance of the Iraqi Government of the foregoing additional terms.



with foreign powers and their agents in spreading harmful propaganda. Their intention was to make this country a centre of trouble and unrest and thereby transform its happiness and tranquillity into misery, with the object of reducing military pressure in other theatres of war.

You all realize the calamities that befell Iraq in a period of only one month. What would have happened if the trouble had lasted for another month or more?

Our international relationship, and our political and military situation, were the best guarantees to keep us far from the scenes of conflict, but the intrigues of foreigners, their gold and their propaganda, with the plotting of usurpers, drove us into a grave crisis, exposed our very existence to the greatest danger.

The strongest measures will be taken against these criminals, and I wish to assure you that the authorities will take all steps necessary to safeguard peace and tranquillity and our return to normal constitutional life.

We shall relentlessly prosecute all those who were responsible for the recent unhappy events, in order to uproot evil from our midst and save our country from their machinations. I conclude my speech by appealing to all citizens to resume their work, return to normal life, and co-operate with the Government in its measures for the preservation of peace and order.

I appeal to Almighty God to assist us in the attainment of our national aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

Midfa'i, regarding the situation as not unlike that which followed the Hikmat-Bakr regime, insisted on following a policy of moderation and refused to take measures against those who sympathized with the Rashid Ali Government, save for the punishment of the principal instigators of the riots on 2 June. The British authorities demanded further co-operation from the Midfa'i Government, which only Ibrahim Kamal, the Minister of Finance, was willing to carry out. A disagreement between Midfa'i and his Minister of Finance, culminating in a sharp exchange of words on 21 September during a Cabinet meeting, resulted in Midfa'i's resignation on the same day. It was then believed that Ibrahim Kamal, supported by a few of his British friends, would form the succeeding Government, and he was invited to do so. But lacking the popularity of his former chief and the prestige of General Nuri, Kamal failed to command sufficient support from the elder politicians. Nuri, who refused to serve under Kamal,<sup>2</sup> was willing to succeed Midfa'i, and the Regent, having accepted Midfa'i's resignation on 7 October, entrusted him with the task of forming a new Government two days later.

<sup>1</sup> *Iraq Times*, 12 June 1941; Arabic text in *az-Zaman*, 13 June 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Kamal never again held a Cabinet position; he died on 31 July 1947.

#### GENERAL NURI'S WAR CABINETS

Nuri had no difficulty in completing the formation of his Government on the same day he was invited to form it. Salih Jabr, who had supported the Regent in his conflict with Rashid Ali, was appointed to the Ministry of Interior and to act in Foreign Affairs. Finance was given to Ali Mumtaz. Later on Abd-Allah ad-Damluchi was given Foreign Affairs (for four months only) and when Sadiq al-Bassam resigned on 9 February 1942 Da'ud al-Haydari was given Justice.<sup>1</sup>

Nuri proceeded to carry out his policy with determination and vigour. As Minister of Defence, in addition to the premiership, he had no difficulty in keeping the army out of politics, since the elements who controlled the army had left the country; but his offer to the British Government to send an Iraqi force to North Africa to take part in the defeat of the Axis Powers was not accepted. He showed no leniency towards those who collaborated with Rashid Ali and issued orders on 29 October for the arrest of 41 of them, the first of a series of arrests of 'disloyal' persons whom the Government regarded, for security purposes, as dangerous.<sup>2</sup> This party, followed by several others numbering 120, was first sent to Fao, situated on the estuary of Shatt al-Arab, and later transferred to Amara. The total number hardly exceeded 350, although the writer has been told that it might have reached between 500 and 700. Nuri also severed diplomatic relations with the Vichy Government and Japan on 17 November because of their support of the Rashid Ali regime.<sup>3</sup> In March 1942 a treaty of amity and commerce was concluded with China, and an Iraqi Legation was opened in Washington. Ali Jawdat, a former Prime Minister, was sent as Iraq's first Minister (later Ambassador) to the United States.

Owing to Nuri's policy of co-operation with Britain, and in particular his stiff measures in dealing with opposition elements, several members of the Cabinet showed an uneasiness which reflected to a large extent latent dissatisfaction of the public. Nuri resigned on 4 October and reconstituted his Cabinet four days later.

During Nuri's long term of office several important steps were undertaken, both in the realm of domestic and foreign affairs. In

<sup>1</sup> The other members of the Cabinet were: Amin Zaki for Transportation and Public Works, Economics for Sayyid Abd al-Mahdi, Justice for Sadiq al-Bassam, Education for Tahsin Ali, and Social Affairs for Jamal Baban.

<sup>2</sup> The arrest was made in accordance with the decree on internal security, issued by Rashid Ali on 31 May 1940.

<sup>3</sup> *az-Zaman*, 18 Nov. 1941.

domestic affairs the most outstanding was the amendment of the constitution and in foreign affairs the declaration of war on the Axis Powers. These two events were of far-reaching significance, but each will be fully discussed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

#### GENERAL NURI'S PRECARIOUS POSITION

Although General Nuri began to relax the measures taken against opposition elements by releasing most of them in February 1943, a step which met with universal approval, he found it exceedingly difficult to maintain harmony among the members of his Cabinet. Two events in particular annoyed two of his colleagues: one was his disagreement with Salih Jabr over the Government candidates for the elections of October 1943, which resulted in the resignation of the latter; and the other was the resignation of Nasrat al-Farisi, Minister for Foreign Affairs, in protest against Nuri's failure to conduct the Arab League's conversations with Nahhas Pasha with the participation of his Foreign Minister.

When the Regent returned to Baghdad from a visit to England on 12 December his relations with Nuri showed considerable coolness. Moreover, there was some criticism of supply arrangements and speculations in which some members of his Government were involved. Thereupon Nuri tendered his resignation on 19 December; but in the circumstances there was no one who wished to accept responsibility. The Regent had no choice but to invite Nuri to form another Cabinet on 25 December. Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, a former Prime Minister, joined the Cabinet as Deputy Prime Minister, but soon had to resign owing to doubts raised in Parliament as to the constitutional authority for appointing a Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup> Relations between the Regent and Nuri remained cool, and the Cabinet, made up of representatives of elder politicians, had become exceedingly unpopular. Nuri himself was exhausted and often absented himself on visits to the Arab countries, which reflected lack of interest in domestic affairs. He tendered his resignation on 19 April 1944, but the Regent,

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XII on Constitutional Development, and Chapter XIII on Foreign Policy.

<sup>2</sup> In order to correct the title of the new position, Nuri appointed Suwaydi as Minister without portfolio and Deputy Prime Minister. Owing to further criticism in Parliament the matter was referred to an advisory opinion of the High Court; but the Court, meeting on 3-4 May 1944, decided in accordance with Art. 64 of the constitution that the combination of the titles Minister without portfolio and Deputy Prime Minister was unconstitutional.

probably owing to the difficulty of finding a successor, did not accept it at once. In the meantime Nuri and his colleagues had become the target of criticism, allegedly encouraged by the Regent, in Parliament and in certain political quarters, and this prompted Nuri to submit another letter of resignation on 23 May in which he reproached the Regent for the delay in accepting his resignation, which had resulted in the unjustified criticism of his Government. The Regent finally accepted Nuri's resignation on 3 June.

#### THE PACHACHI GOVERNMENTS

Upon Nuri's resignation the Regent made his own choice of Prime Minister. There were two obvious candidates: Arshad al-'Umari and Hamdi al-Pachachi. Although Arshad played an important role in the formation of the Cabinet, he preferred to serve under Pachachi as chief. The Pachachi Cabinet, in the selection of whose members the Regent took an active part, may be called 'The Regent's Cabinet'. Two members of the previous Cabinet were retained, Ahmad Mukhtar Baban at Justice and Muhammad Hasan Kubba at Social Affairs. Arshad al-'Umari, former Mayor of Baghdad and the most influential member of the new Cabinet, was given Foreign Affairs and the portfolio of Supply. Interior and Finance were given to Mustafa al-'Umari and Salih Jabr. Pachachi declared in Parliament that his programme was 'practical', emphasizing the improvement of supply conditions and public security, raising the standard of the civil service, and undertaking new constructive projects.<sup>1</sup>

Hardly had the Pachachi Government begun to work, however, than the lack of internal harmony among the ministers presented a serious problem and wrecked any constructive work that might have been done. While Pachachi could command respect and his patriotism was unquestionable, he lacked the leadership and determination which were necessary to carry on the business of government. In the circumstances Arshad often intervened and tried to dominate his colleagues. But his impetuosity aroused antagonism among some of his colleagues and the Cabinet's handling of public affairs was paralysed. Matters came to a head on a scheme of army reforms which General J. M. L. Renton, Inspector-General of the Iraqi army, proposed to Tahsin Ali, Minister of Defence; the scheme involved the regrouping of the four divisions (which remained four only in name)

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 10th (Extraord.) Sess., 1944, p. 3.



and their reduction to two. Tahsin Ali sought to modify the scheme, fearing the opposition of the army officers, and the number of divisions was raised to three. But when the scheme was formally adopted, Tahsin Ali hesitated to carry it out. This resulted in a clash between Arshad and Tahsin Ali at a Cabinet meeting, and the matter was temporarily resolved on 3 August by transferring Tahsin Ali to Transportation and Public Works and entrusting Defence to Arshad al-'Umari. This temporary arrangement did not restore co-operation in the Cabinet, and Pachachi, in order to drop Tahsin Ali, submitted his resignation on 28 August.<sup>1</sup> Shortly before Pachachi resigned, diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union were established on 25 August.

Pachachi's reconstructed Cabinet (29 August) worked more harmoniously than hitherto for another seventeen months, until 30 January 1946, but it achieved virtually nothing constructive. The Government suppressed the Barzan rebellion in Kurdistan by alienating Mulla Mustafa's supporters after having tried to crush it by force. Foreign Affairs attracted Arshad al-'Umari, who attended the final meetings in Cairo for the establishment of the Arab League,<sup>2</sup> but more impressive was his leading the Iraqi delegation to the San Francisco Conference, in which the present writer, at Arshad's suggestion, participated. Arshad acquitted himself very ably as head of the delegation, but, perhaps owing to his limited knowledge of international affairs, he felt that the Charter, which had no direct bearing on the Palestine question, failed to provide adequate guarantees for Arab rights in Palestine. He refused, as head of the delegation, to sign the Charter, which was subsequently signed and ratified by the Iraqi Government. Shortly after Arshad's return to Baghdad, perhaps feeling that his influence in the Cabinet had declined, he resigned on 25 August 1945.

#### POLITICAL TRENDS AFTER THE WAR

Ever since the collapse of the Rashid Ali regime, the liberal and moderate nationalists began to come to the fore in Iraqi politics. The entry of the Soviet Union and the United States into the war on the side of Great Britain and the signing of the Declaration of the United

<sup>1</sup> Tahsin Ali had already submitted his resignation to Pachachi, but the latter preferred to drop Tahsin from the Cabinet by reconstructing it rather than to let Tahsin resign and emerge as a national hero.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 340 below.

Nations on 1 January, embodying the principles of the Atlantic Charter, had immensely enhanced the position of the moderate elements who advocated co-operation with the democratic against the Axis Powers.<sup>1</sup> What aroused further political consciousness throughout Iraq were the avalanche of declarations, broadcasts, and propaganda literature extolling merits of the democratic way of life and promising improvement in the internal conditions of the country if the democratic Powers won the war. The Iraqis endured a serious increase in prices (owing to the shortage of foreign commodities, and to speculation and inflation) as well as martial law, security laws, and regulations which restricted personal liberty and the freedom of the press, trusting that the end of the war would bring the promised better way of life.

When hostilities came to an end, the Pachachi Government, which had become entirely unfitted for the changed conditions of the time, made no move which showed any inclination towards progress or granting the democratic freedoms. The victory of the British Labour Party in the general elections of 1945 was particularly discussed in political circles in Baghdad and the press as favouring the liberal and democratic forces in Iraq. But the Pachachi Government paid no attention to the new spirit, and the security regulations, censorship, and martial law, which were tolerated during the war, were continued. The press began to agitate for a Cabinet change, but Pachachi would not resign.

Owing to continued protests made by representatives of various shades of opinion, the Regent, who had grown considerably in stature and showed increasing interest in domestic politics, took the unprecedented step of calling a meeting of deputies and senators on 27 December, without consulting the Prime Minister, when he made a speech in which he attributed the recurrence of coups d'état in the past to the absence of real parliamentary government. He called for the formation of political parties, and promised full freedom for their activities and the inauguration of economic and social reforms.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate reactions to the Regent's speech were prompt and favourable, but the elder politicians and the reactionaries viewed it with grave suspicion. The Pachachi Government, which represented

<sup>1</sup> See *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 9th Sess., 1942, pp. 10-11, 15-22.

<sup>2</sup> For text of the speech see *al-Bilad*, 28 Dec. 1945. In an interview with the writer, Arshad al-'Umari said that he was consulted on the contents of the speech and prepared its draft.

the vested interests of the elder politicians, failed to honour the Regent's promises in spite of criticism in Parliament.<sup>1</sup> No longer able to control his Cabinet, Pachachi tendered his resignation on 3 January 1946.

#### LIBERALISM VERSUS REACTION

The Regent called a meeting of the leading politicians at his palace and there was a difference of opinion on the new Government to be formed. There were rumours that the elder politicians wanted a strong Government that could check the development of liberal and progressive forces and did not want to try out a liberal Government. A Cabinet crisis developed which lasted twenty-five days owing to the inability of certain elder politicians to form a Government.<sup>2</sup> The situation in the Middle East, however, was such that a liberal Government was deemed necessary to satisfy the clamour of liberalism. The Azerbaijan movement, inspired by the Soviet Union, had disturbed Persia and other neighbouring countries and it was feared that a reactionary Government might force the liberals into open revolt. The crisis was accordingly resolved by inviting Tawfiq as-Suwaydi to form the new Government on 23 February.

The Suwaydi Government was composed of young men sympathetic to liberalism who were determined to carry out the policy of reforms promised in the Regent's speech of 27 December. The Cabinet was composed of such able men as Sa'd Salih, Minister of Interior, a man of great moral integrity, and several others who proved to be instrumental in abolishing the war regulations and restrictions and granted permission for the formation of political parties.<sup>3</sup> Further,

<sup>1</sup> For a devastating criticism of the Government see a speech made by Majid Mustafa in Parliament on 10 Jan. 1946 (*Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 10th Sess., 1945-6, pp. 141-4). Unfortunately when Majid Mustafa was attacked by Mustafa al-'Umari, an elder politician of the reactionary school, he lost courage and withdrew his statement (*ibid.*, pp. 145-6, 173-4). The writer, in an interview with Majid Mustafa (16 Sept. 1953), raised doubt as to the wisdom of his action since it encouraged the reactionary group. He answered apologetically that Mustafa al-'Umari attacked him on personal grounds and that the withdrawal of the statement was intended to calm the uneasiness of the Kurdish deputies who would have reopened an Arab-Kurdish quarrel.

<sup>2</sup> The Regent was counting on Salih Jabr to form a Government, but when Jabr's arm was broken in a car accident, Nuri as-Sa'id tried to form a Government in which Salih Jabr and Sa'd Salih would be included. Salih Jabr refused to co-operate with Sa'd Salih and Nuri failed to form a Government (information supplied by Amir Abd al-Ilah, Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, and Arshad al-'Umari). See also *Proc. Senate*, 20th Sess., 1945-6, pp. 44-49.

<sup>3</sup> For the formation of political parties see Chapter XII.

the Suwaydi Government announced a programme of reform based on the principles proclaimed by the Regent in his speech of 27 December, including the enactment of a new Electoral Law and the strengthening of parliamentary government.

#### 'THE GATHERING STORM'

The Suwaydi Government, which was formed to grant certain democratic freedoms in order to win the confidence of the new generation and liberal elements, was opposed by the leading elder politicians, and eventually forced to resign. Sa'd Salih was, perhaps, too quick in giving permission to the five parties to be formed and refused to listen to certain constructive suggestions as to how the political parties should be revived. The elder politicians, supported by the Royal *Diwan*, retorted by overthrowing the Cabinet. Moreover Suwaydi's foreign policy did not fully conform to the ideas of the Regent and General Nuri, who wanted close co-operation with Turkey. Suwaydi proposed to revise the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, and to follow a strong Arab policy with a view to strengthening the Arab League rather than favouring an alliance with Turkey at the expense of Arab solidarity.<sup>1</sup> Although the Suwaydi Government approved the treaty with Turkey at the Regent's suggestion, it made a reservation that it should not contravene the Arab League Pact.

A conspiracy against Suwaydi, who enjoyed the confidence of the Chamber of Deputies, was planned in the Senate. On 23 March 1946 the Suwaydi Government submitted to the Senate (after it had been approved by the other house) a temporary budget for two months, as the general budgetary law had not been submitted to Parliament, but it was noticed that nine senators were absent. The remaining sixteen senators, having approved the new Electoral Law<sup>2</sup> which was the first item on the agenda, asked for an adjournment of five minutes. When the meeting was resumed, it was found impossible to consider the temporary budgetary law since nine other senators had absented themselves and there was no quorum. This action was a deliberate move to force Suwaydi to resign because the parliamentary extraordinary session was coming to an end and the Government could not continue in office without a temporary budgetary law to finance

<sup>1</sup> The writer's interview with Tawfiq as-Suwaydi. See also statement by Suwaydi in Parliament in 11 Mar. 1946 (*Proc. Senate*, 20th Sess., 1945-6, p. 46). For the text of Suwaydi's Government programme see *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 10th Sess., 1945-6, pp. 205-6.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 304-5 below.



the administration. It was thus that the Suwaydi Government, though it was energetically trying to carry out its reform programme, was forced to resign on 30 May.

On 1 June the Regent called upon Arshad al-'Umari, one of the senators who carried out the plot against Suwaydi, to form the new Government. Arshad quickly formed his Cabinet, recruited mainly from senior Government officials, and declared that his Government was 'neutral and transitional', for the purpose of applying the new Electoral Law passed by the Suwaydi Government and carrying out new and free elections.

With his characteristic quickness of action Arshad al-'Umari immediately began to overhaul the administration by dismissing scores of inefficient civil servants and placing others on the retired list. He also provided a scheme for a ten-year development plan which touched every department of the Government. Diplomatic relations with France were re-established by a decision of the Cabinet on 15 June, and the Iraqi legations in London and Washington were raised to embassies.

Arshad's hostility to the political parties was shown when the Anti-Zionist League, a society which the Suwaydi Government had permitted to be formed, organized a peaceful demonstration on 28 June. Although the demonstration was ostensibly directed against 'oppressive' rule in Palestine, the Communists, who were denied permission to organize a formal party,<sup>1</sup> used this society to promote their activities. The Government, suspecting the demonstration was directed against it, ordered the police to disperse the demonstrators by force resulting in the injury of five, one of whom died.<sup>2</sup> The five political parties, already beginning to suffer from Arshad's restrictive measures, protested against the high-handedness of the Government in suppressing the demonstration. Arshad retorted by limiting the freedom of the press. In his first month of office six warnings were issued to the press, and six papers including party organs were suspended. Demonstrations against the Government's action followed, but Arshad responded merely by further tightening the censorship and arresting party leaders and suspected instigators.<sup>3</sup> In July, when the Iraqi workers went on strike in Kirkuk, demanding that the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 360 below.

<sup>2</sup> *al-Bilad*, 1 and 3 July 1946.

<sup>3</sup> The opposition papers often attacked Arshad al-'Umari on personal grounds and referred to him as the 'erratic and unbalanced Prime Minister' (M. Hadid, 'Conditions in Iraq', *New Statesman*, 4 Sept. 1946, p. 186).

Iraq Petroleum Company increase their wages and give them other privileges, the Iraqi police fired into a labour demonstration, killing eight men and wounding a number of them.<sup>1</sup> Arshad was bitterly attacked for this 'massacre', and 'Abd-Allah al-Qassab, Minister of Interior, resigned on 26 August in protest against his chief's failure to punish the Mutasarrif and Director of Police of Kirkuk for their mis-handling of the situation. Anger against the Arshad 'Umari Government rose still higher in August when Britain, threatened by another strike in the Abadan oilfields, moved forces from India, just across Iraq's border, to reinforce those in Basra. The opposition papers promptly attacked Arshad and asserted that this was a violation of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, which permitted Britain to send reinforcements only in time of war or threat of war.<sup>2</sup> The papers were suppressed and their editors brought to trial.<sup>3</sup> This provoked a printers' and railway workers' strike in September, but the Government had no other remedy but arrest.<sup>4</sup> It was soon realized that Arshad al-'Umari could neither break up the parties nor carry out the elections without disturbances. When the Regent returned from another visit to England he found that Amir Zayd, deputed to act in his place, was dissatisfied with Arshad's handling of the situation. Arshad himself, finding that his Cabinet had indulged in partisan activities and no longer remained neutral to carry out the elections, decided to resign,<sup>5</sup> and tendered his resignation on 16 November.

The Regent called upon General Nuri to form the new Government on 21 November with instructions to hold new elections. During the four months while he remained in power Nuri achieved two important results. First, he created dissension among the parties by inviting two of them, the Ahrar (Liberal) and the National Democratic parties, to take part in the formation of his Government but ignoring the other three, namely the Istiqlal, Ittihad, and Sha'b. The acceptance of the two parties without prior consultation with the other three completely broke the solidarity which Arshad al-'Umari had so unwittingly created by inaugurating his regime of repression.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of this incident and its relation with Communist activities, see pp. 360-1 below.

<sup>2</sup> *Sawt al-Ahali*, 5 Aug. 1946; *al-Bilad*, 8 Aug. 1946; *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, 12 Aug. 1946.

<sup>3</sup> *Sawt al-Ahali*, 1 Sept. 1946.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 15 Sept. 1946.

<sup>5</sup> The writer's interview with Arshad al-'Umari.

<sup>6</sup> The two parties agreed to co-operate with General Nuri on the basis of free elections. For a critical evaluation of the decision of the National Democratic Party to co-operate with General Nuri, see Khalil Kanna, 'The Sa'idi Cabinet and the Participation of the National Democratic Party', *al-Bilad*, 28 Nov. 1946.

Secondly, Nuri proceeded to carry out the new elections with great care to ensure the success of his own supporters. His manipulation of the elections, however, so flagrantly contradicted his promises of free elections that two of his Cabinet members, Ali Mumtaz and Muhammad Hadid, representing the Liberal and National Democratic parties, resigned in protest.<sup>1</sup> But Nuri had achieved his two objectives, in spite of the boycott of elections by the Liberal Party and the withdrawal of the National Democratic members from Parliament when the election returns were announced. On 11 March 1947 Nuri resigned in favour of a successor who was to carry out a policy outlined to him by the Regent and Nuri. The Regent invited Senator Salih Jabr to form the new Government on 29 March, while Nuri retired to the Senate to guide his protégé from behind the scenes.

<sup>1</sup> At least the representative of the National Democratic Party resigned on the question of free elections. See an exchange of letters between Chadirchi, leader of the National Democratic Party, and Nuri as-Sa'id on 21 Jan. 1946 (Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1946).

## CHAPTER XI

### RECURRENCE OF COUPS D'ÉTAT

AFTER the rise of Iraq to statehood there was a tendency towards the concentration of power in the hands of the executive. Parliament became an obsequious assembly and political parties disappeared. Thus the parliamentary system, in fact if not in name, was transformed into a working oligarchy with a group of elder politicians operating it. The intense rivalry among the oligarchs gave an opening to the army to control Government, which demonstrated their weakness to govern as 'civilian' rulers. The military were soon involved in internal struggle, culminating in the Rashid Ali coup d'état.

The collapse of the Rashid Ali regime resulted in the return of authority to civilian hands. As a result, political consciousness was aroused and there was an almost universal demand for democratic freedoms promised during the war. The Regent's speech of 27 December 1945, it will be recalled, reflected a realization of this political consciousness and the rise of a 'new force' in politics which, as subsequent events demonstrated, could be destructive if not permitted to play its role through constitutional channels. Evidence of the significance of this political consciousness was the immediate favourable response to the formation of political parties. There were, it is true, certain tactical errors in the way in which the Suwaydi Government gave permission to the parties to be formed which aroused the suspicion of the oligarchs; but the Suwaydi Government was essentially right in giving recognition to the rising force of popular opinion.

The 'new force' was made up of two former groupings, although they were formally organized as two, or perhaps three, political parties. The first was the old Ahali group, whose ideology of democracy and socialism had become popular. This group was split into two, owing in the main to personal differences, rationalized on ideological grounds: the Chadirchi party emphasizing democracy, the other, led by Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, stressing socialism. The second group was made up of the pan-Arabs, former followers of Rashid Ali, and members of the Muthanna Club, who reorganized



themselves into an almost socialist political party. This group formed the Istiqlal Party. It accepted, in principle, the programme of the Ahali group, and pledged to co-operate with the other political parties for the restoration of parliamentary life. From the start the Istiqlal and the Ahali groups might have easily merged into one political party had they had a well-balanced leadership that could sink personal differences and past rivalries in their common interests. As it stood in 1945-8 the 'new force' betrayed certain weaknesses.

The elder politicians reacted violently to the new popular force. Their combined pressure, with the Regent's approval, resulted in the overthrow of the Suwaydi Government. It needed two new Cabinets to undo what Suwaydi had done in giving formal recognition to the popular force. Arshad al-'Umari, it will be recalled, tried to suppress it by force; he was perhaps able to bend it, but in his attempt he was himself broken. General Nuri, more discreet about his intention to break it, exploited the personal differences between the Istiqlal and the Ahali leaders. He invited the latter to co-operate in the formation of his Government on the basis of 'free elections'. Chadirchi's acceptance, resulting in the loss of Istiqlal confidence, broke the solidarity between his party and the other which it had been possible to establish only recently. Outwardly the elder politicians won over the popular force; for, as a short-term measure, Nuri was to be congratulated on a master stroke.

But very soon the popular force recovered from its temporary setback. During 1946-7 there was throughout the Arab world great concern about the future of Palestine. In Iraq, as in the other Arab countries, the people were permitted to express their feelings by such means as demonstrations, protests sent to foreign Governments and organizations, and by free expression in the press, in the hope that these nationalist outbursts might induce Britain and the United States to sympathize with nationalist aspirations. The popular force took an active part in organizing these demonstrations, which helped to strengthen its hold over the people. When the Arab Governments suffered the loss of their case at the United Nations, and defeat in the Palestine War, the popular force joined hands with other popular movements throughout the Arab world in blaming the Arab Governments for their mishandling of the Palestine problem and for their failure to impose effective sanctions against Britain and the United States. Thus the popular force, despite the opposition of the elder politicians, was able to re-establish its solidarity and, in the name of

Arab rights in Palestine, could defy with impunity any group in power that failed in its national duty. Demonstrations and public disorder had become a daily affair, which often occurred for reasons having nothing to do with national issues.

#### THE SALIH JABR GOVERNMENT

It was in this atmosphere that Salih Jabr formed his Government on 29 March 1947. He was the first Shi'i to become a Prime Minister; his elevation to power, however, was not merely a recognition of the fact that the time had come to choose a Premier from this sect but also a tribute to the man who had shown courage and single-mindedness in his past political career. Jabr had distinguished himself as an able administrator, and consistently associated himself with moderate nationalists who advocated Anglo-Iraqi co-operation. When the question of revising the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 was under consideration, Salih Jabr was thought to be the right man to do it.

The Jabr Government announced an ambitious programme of reform, including the revision of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, the signing of an Iraqi-Transjordan Treaty, and the ratification of a Turco-Iraqi agreement.<sup>1</sup> Sweeping social reforms and economic and cultural development were promised. The Government's programme was one of the most ambitious ever announced by an Iraqi Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup>

Although Jabr was preoccupied with the Palestine problem and with the preliminary negotiations with the British authorities, he rather unwisely mishandled the internal situation and, not unlike Arshad al-'Umari, resorted to drastic measures against the press and parties which led them to frenzied agitation against the Government. On 29 September it was officially announced that the Sha'b and the National Union parties were formally suppressed on grounds of sedition. Aziz Sharif, leader of the Sha'b Party, escaped arrest by leaving Iraq, but Chadirchi and Abd al-Fattah, leaders of the National Democratic and National Union parties, were brought to trial. A few Communist leaders were also tried and many received various sentences of imprisonment.

The other three parties protested against the arrest of party leaders.

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on the Turkish and Transjordan treaties see pp. 344, 347 below.

<sup>2</sup> See text of the programme in *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 11th (Extraord.) Sess., 1947, pp. 80-87. For a summary of the programme see *The Times*, 25 June 1947, p. 5.

The parties had already shown dissatisfaction with Jabr's foreign policy, and his highhanded action against the parties and press compelled them to unite. Moreover the economic and food situation had deteriorated to such an extent that the parties and other opposition groups called for Jabr's resignation.

#### THE PORTSMOUTH TREATY

In spite of these inauspicious conditions preliminary negotiations on revision of the 1930 treaty began in Baghdad and were conducted secretly from 8 to 17 May 1947. Three of these meetings, over which the Regent presided, were held at the Rihab Palace. From the very beginning Jabr insisted that the Palestine question and the need of the Iraqi army for arms should be linked with the new treaty. There was an identity of views between the Iraqi and the British negotiators, but final agreement on the basic principles rested with the approval of the Cabinets of the two countries. Since the Regent was planning to visit England in August 1947, Jabr informed the British Government that he was ready to accompany him to resume the negotiations there.

Ernest Bevin, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, replied that he would be ready to negotiate directly with the Iraqi Premier in November, as he was preoccupied with a number of European problems all the summer. During his visit to England the Regent saw Bevin on 18 August and sent a letter to Jabr in which he stated that Bevin told him 'We are prepared to have an honourable long-term agreement', and was anxious to know what the preliminary Iraqi proposals were.<sup>1</sup> On 10 October the Regent, who was still in England, sent two cables<sup>2</sup> to Jabr stating in the first that Bevin had told him that the British Cabinet had been considering the British proposals, and in the other communicating the content of these proposals which included:

1. The air bases in Iraq would not be completely given up by Britain.
2. The two airfields at Habbaniya and Shu'ayba would continue under British control.
3. British and Iraqi forces would jointly use the two airfields.
4. Details of the arrangement would be discussed later if the Iraqi Government accepted the foregoing principles.

<sup>1</sup> The Regent's letter to Salih Jabr, 19 Aug. 1947. See Salih Jabr's account of the Treaty of Portsmouth, *ash-Sha'b*, 27 Jan. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> Text of the Regent's cable, dated 10 Oct. 1947, in *ibid*.

Upon the Regent inquiring whether the control of the two bases could be given to Iraq with the understanding that the British would participate in their operation, Bevin remarked:

1. The two bases should be operated with efficiency.
2. If the control of the two bases were given to Iraq, negligence in the operation might follow resulting from British lack of responsibility.
3. Our policy is not to let any country know our military secrets except our friends whom we regard as members of our family. Iraq is regarded as a member of the family and would be entitled to know these secrets in her participation in the operation of the two bases.
4. Our stay in the two bases is not for the purpose of dominating Iraq, but for defending both Iraq and ourselves. If it were not for this purpose we would have evacuated them.
5. With regard to military training and rearmament Iraq would be regarded on equal footing with us.

Dissatisfied with these proposals, Jabr informed the Regent on 13 October that the negotiations in Baghdad the previous May were based on the assumption that Britain was willing to evacuate the two bases, but that Iraqi control would permit the British Government to participate in the operation of the bases for the purpose of joint defence against a common enemy. He added that he would refuse to resume the negotiations unless Bevin accepted the principle of Iraqi control of the bases. To this Bevin would not agree and Jabr threatened to resign.

The Regent returned to Baghdad towards the end of October and was faced with Jabr's determination to resign. The British Government submitted a memorandum in which Bevin's proposals were reformulated in a more flexible and acceptable manner, but Jabr requested the reconsideration of the original principles of the agreement. Thereupon a delegation arrived in Baghdad and the negotiations were resumed from 22 November till 4 December. Various draft proposals and counter-proposals were exchanged in which the principle of Iraqi control of the two bases, but with adequate facilities for Britain, was accepted. The details were left to be worked out in the forthcoming negotiations between Bevin and Jabr. These preliminary steps were satisfactory to the Iraqi Government, and the place for completing the negotiations was shifted from Baghdad to London to enable the chief British and Iraqi negotiators to exchange views directly.

Before Jabr proceeded to London, General Nuri suggested holding a meeting of the leading politicians and prominent members of



Parliament to discuss the proposed treaty revision. It was agreed that three questions should be presented for discussion:

1. Was Iraq in need of a treaty of alliance with a foreign Power?
2. If an alliance with a foreign Power were needed, who would be that Power?
3. What should be the basic principles of the alliance?

On 28 December the Regent called a meeting at the Rihab Palace, attended by the leading elder politicians.<sup>1</sup> The parties were not invited to send representatives, which gave the impression that the Rihab conference was another 'plot' designed by the elder politicians to come to an understanding with British imperialism.<sup>2</sup> At this meeting the elder politicians agreed that in the present state of world conditions Iraq was in need of a treaty with Britain, but that such a treaty should be on the basis of equality and mutual interests. Many of them stressed the necessity for the evacuation of British forces, but showed willingness to give Britain the right to use the air bases in the event of war. Only two of them, Shabibi and Farisi, refused to express an opinion before they knew what the Government's proposals were, although they did not oppose the signing of a treaty with Britain in principle.<sup>3</sup>

On 3 January 1948 the Regent called another meeting at the Rihab Palace, attended by the Prime Minister, Salih Jabr, General Nuri, Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, and Ahmad Mukhtar Baban. After a careful review of the principal proposals the Regent suggested that Nuri and Tawfiq as-Suwaydi should accompany the Iraqi delegation, led by the Prime Minister, to negotiate with Bevin in London. Jabr welcomed the Regent's proposal, and it was approved by the Cabinet on the following day. On 6 January the delegation arrived in London.

Negotiations in which the basic principles were reviewed began on 7 January. On the same day Jabr called a meeting of his own delegation in which further proposals were formulated as follows:

<sup>1</sup> The politicians who were invited to attend were the following: Salih Jabr, Nuri as-Sa'id, Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, Jamil al-Midfai, Hamdi al-Pachachi, Arshad al-'Umar, Hikmat Sulayman, Muhammad as-Sadr, Sayyid 'Abd al-Mahdi, 'Abd al-Aziz al-Qassab, 'Umar Nazmi, Mustafa al-'Umari, Nasrat al-Farisi, Muhammad Hasan Kubba, Muhammad Rida ash-Shabibi, Sadiq al-Bassam, Najib ar-Rawi, Da'ud al-Haydari, Mawlud Mukhlis, Baha' ad-Din Nuri. Ahmad Mukhtar Baban, Chief of the Royal *Diwan*, acted as secretary.

<sup>2</sup> The political parties issued manifestoes of protest against this meeting (see texts in *Liwa' al-Istiqlal* and *Sawt al-Ahrar*, 2 Jan. 1948, and *Sawt al-Ahali*, 8 Feb. 1948).

<sup>3</sup> For the verbatim minutes of the Rihab conference see *ash-Sha'b*, 28 Jan. 1952.

1. The preamble of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 should be replaced by that of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936.
2. Consultation on foreign policy with the British Government, as provided in Article 1 of the Treaty of 1930, should no longer be continued under the new treaty.
3. All the annexures of the Treaty of 1930, concerning military advice, railways, &c., should be abolished.
4. The Powers of the Sa'dabad and Arab League Pacts should not be included under Article 4 of the new treaty.
5. Right of the two signatories to ask for revision of the treaty should be ten rather than fifteen years.

These additional proposals, except the last, were accepted by the British delegation, and the negotiations proceeded quickly and satisfactorily till 10 January when the final text was initialed. The formal date of the signing of the treaty was fixed on 15 January at Portsmouth.<sup>1</sup>

On the occasion of the signing of the treaty Bevin said that:

The negotiations for the treaty had not been negotiations of two peoples seeking to take advantage of one another, or to reconcile greater differences, but to put their friendship into words. Everything which was objectionable in the old treaty had been removed and they had established in this one what had been the practice for some time, that of meeting each other on terms of absolute equality, and with the determination to make their mutual contribution according to their capacity, strength, man-power, and will to the peace of the world. This treaty was the beginning of a new series of treaties, regularizing and expressing the friendship between this country and the Arabic world. Great Britain prized that friendship, and he was sure the Arabic world equally valued it.<sup>2</sup>

In reply Jabr said on behalf of his Government that '... they were signing a treaty which was an expression of their mutual desire to live as free and equal allies and friends. It put the traditional friendship of their two peoples on a new, firm, and solid basis. This treaty would help them to work together for international peace and prosperity.'

The Portsmouth Treaty was an alliance between Britain and Iraq on the basis of equality and complete independence, which provided that 'each of the high contracting parties undertakes not to adopt in foreign countries an attitude which is inconsistent with the alliance or might create difficulties for the other party'. It also pledged that any

<sup>1</sup> Portsmouth happened to be more convenient than London, because the Iraqi delegation were visiting British defence organizations, and Bevin was on holiday in the neighbourhood.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 16 Jan. 1948.

dispute with a third party should be the subject of consultation between the two parties with a view to settling it by peaceful means, but that if one of the two parties become engaged in war, the other would 'immediately come to his aid as a measure of collective defence'. The annexure of the treaty was the more interesting as it provided several innovations. It recognized the importance of the air bases as 'an essential element in the defence of Iraq itself and of international security', but Britain's use of the air bases in the event of war, or threat of war, would be dependent on Iraq's invitation. The text of this clause follows:

In the event of either High Contracting Party becoming involved in war, or of a menace of hostilities, His Majesty the King of Iraq will invite His Britannic Majesty to bring immediately to Iraq the necessary forces of all arms and will furnish to His Britannic Majesty on Iraqi territory all the facilities and assistance in his power, including the use of railways, rivers, ports, aerodromes and lines of communication on the same financial terms as those applicable to the forces of His Majesty the King of Iraq.

Another important innovation was the establishment of a Joint Defence Board for the purpose of discussing matters of defence for both countries. Article 5 of the annexure reads:

In the common defence interests of the United Kingdom and Iraq a permanent joint advisory body will be set up . . . to co-ordinate defence matters between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Iraqi Government. . . . This body, which will be known as the Anglo-Iraqi Joint Defence Board, will be composed of competent military representatives of the two Governments in equal numbers, and its functions will include:

- (a) The formulation of agreed plans in the strategic interests common to both countries,
- (b) Immediate consultation on the threat of war,
- (c) The co-ordination of measures to enable the forces of either High Contracting Party to fulfil their obligations . . . ,
- (d) Consultation regarding the training of the Iraqi Forces and the provision of equipment for them. . . .

Both parties agreed to grant each other facilities in military matters on the basis of mutual interest. Iraq promised to employ British subjects whenever foreign military instructors were needed, and also to send Iraqis to England whenever military training was sought abroad. The period of the treaty, unless revised within fifteen years, was fixed at twenty years.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Treaty of Alliance between . . . Great Britain . . . and Iraq, 15 January 1948, Iraq No. 1 (1948), Cmd. 7309.*

This treaty was certainly an improvement on the Treaty of 1930. It sought to establish the alliance on the basis of respect for Iraqi independence and mutuality of interest. Salih Jabr called it the 'Treaty between Two Equals' (*nadd li'l-nadd*). The two air bases, which were often the subject of criticism, were handed back to Iraq, to be used in a manner to be decided freely by the Joint Defence Board. British forces were to be evacuated, and Iraq would be supplied with arms and military training. As Bevin pointed out, everything objectionable in the old treaty was removed from the new treaty, since its purpose was to put 'friendship into words'. And yet the treaty was repudiated by a popular coup d'état as soon as the news of its signature reached Baghdad.

#### THE UPRISING OF 1948 (*AL-WATHBA*)

Street demonstrations had been going on intermittently since the deterioration of the Arab position in Palestine, but the news broadcast in London on 3 January that negotiations were in progress for signing a new treaty of alliance between Britain and Iraq gave impetus to fresh agitation. Although the Prime Minister, who was still in Baghdad, made a statement in Parliament on 4 January repudiating unfounded rumours about the treaty, the press and parties aroused public opinion and the students in the various colleges rushed to demonstrate in the streets. On the following day the Government issued an order suspending teaching at the Law College for an indefinite period. The students in the other colleges and high schools went on strike in protest against this action, but after the Prime Minister had left for England, his deputy, Jamal Baban, came to an understanding with the students that they would return to their colleges, and classes were resumed three days later.

When the text of the treaty was released to the Iraqi press on 16 January the students went on strike for three days and organized demonstrations. In the meantime the political parties issued manifestoes repudiating the treaty as inconsistent with Iraqi national interests, and this aggravated the students' agitation against the Government.<sup>1</sup> On 19 January, after three days of continuous rioting and demonstrations, the Government broadcast a statement to the students giving warning of severe punishment if they did not resume their class-work.<sup>2</sup> But this provoked the students to frenzies and they

<sup>1</sup> For texts of the manifestoes see *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, 18 Jan. 1948; *Sawt al-Ahali*, 9 Feb. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> See text in *az-Zaman*, 20 Jan. 1948.



organized a mass demonstration on 20 January, joined by the people, in which excitement reached a high pitch. The police and the students fired at each other, with several casualties on both sides. When the police, in hot pursuit, fired at several medical students in their college, the Dean and the faculty of medicine submitted their resignations. Since the political parties had been excluded from formal consultation and their activities subjected to rigid control and censorship, they saw their opportunity in this popular excitement, and joined forces with the students and public, demanding the dismissal of the Jabr Government and the repudiation of the treaty. Street demonstrations continued in spite of all efforts made by the police to stop disorder. The Government's appeal to the press and the people to end the agitation was not heeded.

On the evening of 21 January the Regent called a meeting at the Royal *Diwan* attended by leading public men and representatives of the political parties to discuss the situation. The representatives of the parties attacked the Jabr Government and demanded the immediate repudiation of the treaty. The meeting lasted five hours and the Regent, in order to put an end to disorder, issued the following proclamation:

In view of the importance attached by the Regent to the country's public affairs, and of present circumstances, the Regent summoned the leaders of public opinion, comprising former Premiers, the Vice-President of the Senate, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, and representatives of political parties, to a meeting at the Royal *Diwan* at which the entire Cabinet was present. They unanimously decided that the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty signed at Portsmouth does not realize the country's aspirations, and is not a beneficial instrument to consolidate the bonds of friendship between the two countries. As the Council of Ministers has not approved ratification of the treaty, the Regent promises the Iraqi people that no treaty will be ratified that does not assure the rights of the country and the national aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

In Baghdad the initial response to the proclamation was favourable and it immediately stopped hostile demonstrations, although agitation against those who signed the treaty continued. In London, however, the news came as a surprise to the British Government since the treaty was held to have been freely negotiated with the Iraqi delegation. On 22 January Salih Jabr, who was still in London, made

<sup>1</sup> Arabic text in *Sawt al-Ahali*, 11 Feb. 1948; English translation in *The Times*, 22 Jan. 1948.

a statement in which he denounced his political opponents as 'destructive elements' who had 'exploited some innocent students and succeeded in creating disorders'.

On our return to Iraq [continued Jabr] we shall explain the intentions of the new Treaty to the Parliament and people. We are confident that it will be found that the national aspirations of the country are fully realized in this Treaty and that the overwhelming majority of the country will support it. It is with this belief that my colleagues and myself signed this Treaty.<sup>1</sup>

Surprised at this unexpected opposition in Baghdad, Bevin, speaking in Parliament on 22 January, said:

There must have been some misunderstanding in Baghdad. Neither I nor the Iraqi Prime Minister would have set our signatures to any document which ignored the aspirations of the people of Iraq. . . . I hope that the Treaty, which has been worked out with such care, will serve as a model, when it has been carefully studied, for other Middle East defence arrangements.<sup>2</sup>

On 26 January Jabr returned to Baghdad. A meeting was held at the Rihab Palace attended by the Prime Minister, General Nuri, and Jamal Baban, the Deputy Premier. Jabr requested an opportunity to defend his position before the public. He broadcast a statement in which he said that a full explanation of the provisions of the treaty would shortly be issued; no final decision on its merits should be taken before then. In the meantime orders were issued to the police to stop by force any demonstrations that might take place. The immediate reactions to Jabr's failure to resign and his insistence on defending the treaty incited an already excited public to clash with the police and there were several casualties. Cries of 'down with Salih Jabr' and 'down with the treaty' were reiterated, but Jabr would not resign. In protest against the severe action taken by the police, several leading public men resigned, including Jamal Baban, Minister of Justice and Deputy Premier, and about thirty members of Parliament and the President of the Chamber of Deputies. Faced with such overwhelming opposition, Jabr presented his resignation in the evening of 27 January, and it was immediately accepted.

Viewed in retrospect the Portsmouth Treaty was not the real cause of the uprising of 1948; it was rather the culmination of a series of episodes which demonstrated public lack of confidence in the ruling oligarchy. Since the political parties had identified themselves with

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 23 Jan. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> H.C. Deb., vol. 446, col. 400.

a dissatisfied public, and since Jabr had assumed an uncompromising attitude towards them, the parties exploited every incident to discredit his Government. From the time when the disturbances in Palestine were revived, the Iraqi people became convinced that Britain was largely responsible for the loss of Arab rights in Palestine. The new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, despite its more favourable terms, was not regarded as evidence of friendship and co-operation between Iraq and Britain. Moreover it was signed by a Prime Minister who had already been denounced as an enemy of the political parties. He had been responsible for sending many a nationalist to internment camps during the war, and he had roughly handled the press. Whatever advantages he had gained in his treaty negotiations, he could not impress the public with his genuine patriotism. His treaty was condemned even before it was scrutinized.

#### APPEASEMENT

Since Salih Jabr was a Shi'i Prime Minister, it was deemed necessary that a Shi'i successor should form the new Government lest the Shi'i community should interpret the opposition to Jabr on sectarian grounds. For that purpose there was only one candidate who could command public respect—Senator Muhammad as-Sadr. Although he was old and would have preferred retirement, Sadr accepted the responsibility of authority as a patriotic duty.<sup>1</sup> He formed a Government on 29 January in which three former Premiers accepted office under him (Midfa'i for Interior, Pachachi for Foreign Affairs, and Arshad al-'Umari for Defence). Only one political party was represented, the Istiqlal, whose leader was appointed as Minister of Supply. The Liberal Party refused to participate when invited, and the National Democratic Party was not invited. The manner in which the parties were manoeuvred to acquiesce in this arrangement reflected the lack of agreement among party leaders, who seem to have co-operated only to force the Jabr Government to resign but were wholly unprepared to follow up their victory and achieve power. Their weakness became the more apparent when the parties appealed

<sup>1</sup> Sadr (1882–1956) began his early career as a nationalist and took an active part in the Iraqi revolt of 1920. Since the establishment of the national Government in 1921 Sadr's main activities had been confined to the Senate, over which he often presided. He was often consulted by the Regent and became one of the members of the Regency Council during his absence from the country. For an account of his life see Abbas Ali, *Za'im ath-Thawra al-Iraqiya* (Baghdad, 1950).

to the mob (presumed to have been under their control) to stop street demonstrations; the mob would not listen to them.

The popular uprising, incited by radical elements (such as the Communists) no less than by party leaders, demanded sweeping reforms which it was not possible to achieve by a Government which in the main represented the elder politicians. The popular demands, as stated by a manifesto issued on the eve of the formation of the Government, may be summarized as follows:

1. The immediate repudiation of the Portsmouth Treaty.
2. Investigation into the actions taken by the former Government against those who took part in the demonstrations.
3. Dissolution of Parliament and the holding of new elections.
4. Guarantees for the democratic freedoms.
5. Permission for political parties to carry on their work freely.
6. Measures to improve the food situation.

When the Government set to work it was found exceedingly difficult to carry on the business of administration in an atmosphere of emotionalism and popular pressure. Upon the recommendation of a Cabinet committee, headed by Nasrat al-Farisi, the Portsmouth Treaty was repudiated on 2 February on the grounds that it was not a fit instrument for strengthening the friendly ties between Iraq and Britain. When the Cabinet was discussing the treaty, Salih Jabr, from his tribal home at Hashimiya (to which he had fled on 28 January), sent cables to leading members of the Government urging them to consider the treaty on its own merits rather than listen to false rumours and propaganda. This appeal to the Cabinet, which fell on deaf ears, incited an already angry public, and the press began to attack Jabr, Nuri, and their followers in the most violent terms.<sup>1</sup>

Parliament was at the outset prorogued for fifty days; but, under popular pressure, it was dissolved on 22 February. The political parties, hoping to participate more actively in the forthcoming elections, had insisted on dissolution. They also demanded freedom of the press and the abolition of censorship. The findings of the Committee of Investigation on the causes and casualties resulting from street demonstrations were not acted on by the Cabinet, owing to the difficulties involved in reopening the issue.<sup>2</sup> The atmosphere, however, remained tense owing to the loss of Arab rights in Palestine.

<sup>1</sup> For a more balanced criticism see *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, 3 Feb. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> The (unpublished) Report of the Investigation Committee was submitted on 7 July 1948.



A Cabinet reshuffle took place on 4 March when Midfa'i resigned; he had agreed to join the Government only for a short period. 'Umar Nazmi, who protested against the dissolution of Parliament, also resigned on the same day. Hamdi al-Pachachi, Minister for Foreign Affairs, died on 27 March, and was replaced by Nasrat al-Farisi. Mustafa al-'Umari took charge of Interior.

During April and May the elections were held, at a time when the Palestine mandate was declared terminated, and the Iraqi Government, in order to prevent disorder, declared martial law. While the Prime Minister honestly sought to carry out free elections, individual ministers tried to use their influence in their own constituencies.<sup>1</sup> This aroused criticism in the press, and the Istiqlal representative in the Cabinet resigned in protest on 7 June. The election returns, completed on 15 June, showed that 71 deputies out of 138 were new members, while the political parties hardly won more than six seats. Their defeat demonstrated their lack of organization no less than their weakness in a struggle against the more experienced elder politicians. On 16 June the Prime Minister tendered his resignation on the grounds that he had completed the task for which he formed the Government, and the Regent, thanking him for the valuable work that he had accomplished, accepted his resignation on 23 June.

#### FROM UPRISING TO UPRISING

Although Sadr had succeeded in pacifying an angry public, his lenient regime resulted in the deterioration of Government administration. To inspire confidence the country needed a strong man, known for his honesty and straightforwardness. For such a head of Government the Regent turned to Muzahim al-Pachachi, who had distinguished himself during the Mandate period as a strong politician. Owing to his long absence from Iraq, mainly in diplomatic service which enriched his experience in foreign affairs, he was not expected to be involved in personal and partisan issues which had rendered the atmosphere very tense. When he went to see the Regent, Pachachi had not even the faintest idea that the Regent would invite him to form a Government, but he readily consented. This Cabinet, like that of Hamdi al-Pachachi, may be called the Regent's Cabinet, since many of its members were nominated by him.

The Pachachi Government announced no programme in Parliament, but the Prime Minister stated that he would devote himself to

<sup>1</sup> See *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, 13 May 1948.

reforms once he had studied Iraq's internal problems. The financial situation had deteriorated owing to a fall in trade and reduction in oil royalties (the latter resulting from the stoppage of the Haifa pipeline). Attempts were made to secure a loan from Egypt and the International Bank, but no immediate recovery was in sight. When the remedies suggested by Ali Mumtaz, Minister of Finance, were not accepted, he resigned on 27 October. On top of all else the Government was pressed by the parties and student demonstrations to carry on the war in Palestine rather than accept the truce. But Pachachi, who was in favour of the continuation of the war, was confronted with Arab disunity and could not offer much help. Owing to these difficulties only martial law helped to maintain internal order, but conflict developed between the civil and military authorities over its enforcement, and it became necessary to restrict the military courts to cases which had a bearing only on the war in Palestine and subversive activities. This resulted in disagreement with Sadiq al-Bassam, Minister of Defence, who resigned on 27 September. Certain other changes in the Government were made on 20 October, including the appointment of Shakir al-Wadi, one of the principal negotiators of the Portsmouth Treaty, as Minister of Defence. Shakir's appointment aroused opposition in Parliament and was construed to mean that Pachachi had become completely subservient to the elder politicians. Salih Jabr and Nuri as-Sa'id returned to Baghdad in time to support Pachachi, and it was only under a regime of censorship and martial law that the Government was able to remain in power. Owing to strict censorship the National Democratic and Liberal parties decided to cease operating on 1 December and issued manifestoes to this effect.<sup>1</sup> Demonstrations at Falluja at the end of December in favour of intervention to help Egypt in its war with Israel led to disagreement with the military, while Parliament became hostile to Pachachi's indecisive stand. Faced with this situation Pachachi tendered his resignation on 6 January 1949. The parties criticized his letter of resignation for not stating the real reason and reproached him for his complete surrender to the supporters of the Portsmouth Treaty.<sup>2</sup>

The Regent invited General Nuri to form a new Government with specific instructions to save the situation in Palestine in accordance with a resolution passed by Parliament on 28 November 1948 to that effect. Nuri very quickly formed his Cabinet on the same day on

<sup>1</sup> See *Sawt al-Ahrrar*, 3 Dec. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> See *Sawt al-Ahali*, 9 Jan. 1949.

which Pachachi resigned. After futile conversations with Egypt, he failed to improve the Arab position in Palestine. He accordingly ordered withdrawal of the Iraqi army and was criticized on the grounds that this enabled Israel to advance to the area held by the Iraqi army. Failure in Palestine compelled Nuri to turn to internal problems. He crushed the Communist organizations with an iron hand,<sup>1</sup> and sent several opposition leaders to prison. He approached the Istiqlal Party for possible collaboration; but this party, in view of Nuri's past ill intentions towards its leaders, refused to collaborate with him. He therefore decided to organize his Constitutional Union Party—which was designed to include various shades of opinion. Sami Shawkat, a former supporter of Nuri, organized the Islah (Reform) Party. Thus three parties became active in politics during 1949. On 5 November Nuri tendered his resignation to the Regent, stating that he had accomplished the purposes for which he had formed his Government. His resignation, however, which was mainly due to differences among the members of his Cabinet on inter-Arab affairs, was not accepted by the Regent who asked him on 19 November to withdraw it. When Parliament convened on 1 December Nuri again asked the Regent to relieve him of the responsibility of authority and, after ascertaining that Ali Jawdat al-Ayyubi would form a new Government, his resignation was accepted on 10 December.

Ali Jawdat sought the co-operation of Muzahim al-Pachachi, who served both as Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister. Husayn Jamil, Secretary of the National Democratic Party,<sup>2</sup> entered the Cabinet as Minister of Justice. Ali Jawdat's Cabinet was formed in response to certain nationalist circles in Syria who desired to cement the relations between the two countries as a step toward the creation of a Fertile Crescent Union. Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who opposed the extension of Hashimi rule to Syria, opposed the scheme. Thereupon Pachachi went to Egypt to discuss the Syrian situation. He was persuaded by the Egyptian Government that intervention in the domestic affairs of Syria was likely to produce internal instability and reaction against the general scheme of Arab unity. It was argued that both Egypt and Iraq should abstain from any intervention in the internal affairs of Syria for at least five years until the situation returned to normal. A

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 361–3 below.

<sup>2</sup> Since his party ceased to operate, Husayn Jamil entered the Cabinet in his personal capacity.

draft agreement to this effect was initialed by Pachachi and Muhammad Salah ad-Din, Egyptian Foreign Minister, on 30 January 1950.<sup>1</sup>

Upon the return of Pachachi to Baghdad a meeting was called by the Regent at the Rihab Palace in the evening of 30 January to which the members of the Cabinet were invited. News of the draft agreement had already reached Baghdad and some members of the Cabinet complained that they had not known the purpose of Pachachi's visit to Egypt. Pachachi ably defended his agreement, but when he was asked by the Regent to state why the period specified was five years, he gave the embarrassing answer that this period would coincide with the remaining period of the Regency, which implied that Iraq's intervention in Syria was inspired by the Regent. Not only was the agreement repudiated by Pachachi's colleagues, but it was also opposed by the Istiqlal Party and other nationalist circles who aspired to achieve Syro-Iraqi unity. Finding that his Cabinet no longer enjoyed the confidence of the Regent, Ali Jawdat submitted his resignation on the following day.

The Regent invited Tawfiq as-Suwaydi to form a new Government on 5 February with specific instructions to improve relations with the other Arab countries, since Ali Jawdat's resignation had created an unfavourable reaction in those countries. Suwaydi at first sought the co-operation of both the Istiqlal and Constitutional Union parties; but when the former demanded three representatives in the Cabinet, including the Deputy Prime Minister, he co-operated only with the Constitutional Union Party (represented by five members in the Cabinet) and with several independent politicians. On 16 February Suwaydi announced the programme of his Government in Parliament in which he stressed the need 'for cementing the brotherly relations and understanding among the Arab states'.<sup>2</sup>

In the ensuing debate the Government was criticized in the Chamber of Deputies for lack of harmony among its members, but in the Senate it was attacked by Muzahim al-Pachachi both on its Arab policy and on the manner in which the Cabinet was formed. Since Pachachi was himself the cause of the fall of the previous Cabinet on the question of Syro-Iraqi unity, he tried to defend that policy on the

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion on the scheme of unity between Syria and Iraq, see M. Khaduri, 'The Scheme of Fertile Crescent Unity: a Study in Inter-Arab Relations', in R. N. Frye, ed., *The Near East and the Great Powers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), pp. 137–77.

<sup>2</sup> See text of the programme in *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 11th Sess., 1949–50, pp. 21–23.



grounds that 'partial Arab unity is harmful to full Arab unity'. On the manner in which Cabinets were formed Pachachi said that Iraq had been ruled by a handful of politicians created under certain exceptional circumstances; he compared them with Timurtash, the Palace Minister under Riza Shah of Persia, who carried out his master's order under oppression.<sup>1</sup> Although Suwaydi ably defended his Government and Parliament approved its programme, Pachachi's attack on the Government, in which he indirectly reproached the Palace for creating prototype Timurtashes, cost him his seat in the Senate. In response to a question raised in Parliament on 28 March 1950 as to the validity of a royal decree issued during the Regent's absence on 11 July 1948 appointing Pachachi a senator, the Government referred the matter to the High Court for an advisory opinion. The Court, meeting on 10 April, advised that the decree was unconstitutional on the grounds that the Regent had no right to issue the decree during his absence since his powers were then exercised by a Regency Council.

On 2 March the Minister of Interior, Salih Jabr, introduced to Parliament a draft law by virtue of which Iraqi Jews would be permitted to leave the country if they would give up their nationality. The Government was prompted to take this measure owing to a mass exodus of Iraqi Jews by illegal means; for, as Jabr stated in Parliament, 'ever since martial law had been abolished on 17 December 1949, illegal emigration has been increasing . . . and it is not in the public interest to force people to stay in the country if they have no desire to do so'.<sup>2</sup> Although the draft law was opposed in both houses of Parliament by Isma'il Ghanim and Muzahim al-Pachachi on the grounds that it was inconsistent with Arab interests,<sup>3</sup> it was accepted as an emergency measure. The law provided:

*Article 1.* The Council of Ministers is empowered to deprive any Iraqi Jew of Iraqi nationality who, of his free will, chooses to leave Iraq for ever, after he shall so signify in writing before an official designated by the Minister of Interior.

*Article 2.* Any Iraqi Jew who leaves Iraq [legally] or attempts to leave illegally shall be deprived of Iraqi nationality by a decision of the Council of Ministers.

*Article 3.* Any Iraqi Jew who had already left Iraq illegally shall be regarded as though he has left Iraq for ever unless he shall return within two

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Senate*, 23rd Sess., 1949-50, pp. 7-8, 16-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58 ff.; *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 11th Sess., 1949-50, p. 144.

months from the time this law shall become effective; his Iraqi nationality shall be dropped [if he fails to return] after the expiration of that period.

At the outset, when notices appeared in the press stating that every Jew desiring to leave the country should register at the Central Synagogue, many Jews thought that this was a trap to round up suspected Zionists; but when it became known that the Government was really permitting emigration the mass exodus began. Several other registration centres were established and the number of registrants rose much higher than was expected. When the period of the effectiveness of the law, which was to last only one year, came to an end in March 1951, it was found that 104,630 persons had registered. Of these 68,923 were from Baghdad and 35,707 from other localities. In fact many more Jews had emigrated and the grand total during 1950-1 reached the figure 113,545 persons.<sup>1</sup> These were all flown either via Persia or Cyprus to Israel. According to Israeli official statistics, by 1951, 121,512 Iraqi Jews entered Israel since its establishment. The number of Jews remaining in Iraq has been estimated at from 12,000 to 15,000 persons. Most of them are wealthy people who preferred to remain as Iraqi subjects. The great majority of those who emigrated were either poor or had to dispose of their property by sale at low prices. Although the Jews lost a great deal of property, the Government's action sought to put an end to an internal problem by giving the Jewish community the choice between remaining as loyal subjects or emigrating to Israel.

Two other important projects had been initiated by the Suwaydi Government before its resignation, namely the enactment of a law for the establishment of a Development Board on 11 April 1950 and the initial negotiations for new oil agreements. Suwaydi's resignation was precipitated by a rift that had developed between him and Salih Jabr on a tribal matter. As he told the present writer, he seemed to have aspired to dissolve Parliament, which was not permitted, and when he faced certain difficulties in his relations with Amir Zayd (Deputy Regent during Amir 'Abd al-Ilah's visit to England in August and September 1950), he submitted his resignation on 12 September.

Amir Zayd, acting under instructions from the Regent, invited General Nuri to form a Government on 16 September. Nuri quickly formed his Cabinet and announced on the same day, in a press conference, that the programme of his Government would include the

<sup>1</sup> See Joseph B. Schechtman, 'The Repatriation of Iraq Jewry', *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. xv (1953), pp. 151-72.

carrying out of great development projects under the Development Board and that he would enhance the prestige of his administration by the strict enforcement of law and justice. During Nuri's long term of office, which lasted almost twenty-three months, Iraq made great progress in economic development. Nuri successfully negotiated new oil agreements by virtue of which the enormous hidden wealth of the country made it possible for the newly established Development Board to carry out great irrigation and other construction projects.<sup>1</sup> Nuri submitted his resignation on 10 July 1952, hoping, as he stated in the accompanying letter, that his successor might be able to form a Government composed of public men representing the various parties and groups in order to carry out the new elections (since the parliamentary session was due to expire in 1952).

#### THE UPRISING OF 1952

The 'popular force'—made up of the opposition parties and supported by college students and the man in the street—had yet to incite another uprising, reminiscent of 1948, before it was broken. Its victory in 1948 was short-lived, mainly owing to differences among the opposition parties, who co-operated only in opposing the Portsmouth Treaty and overthrowing the Premier who signed it. Within less than a year the elder politicians returned to power and the opposition parties had to learn the lesson of concerted action anew.

The parliamentary bloc, composed of Shabibi and Farisi and some fifteen other deputies forming an opposition, had swelled in 1950 to thirty-seven deputies as a result of an understanding with the Istiqlal, the National Democratic, and a few independent deputies. On 6 March 1950 the thirty-seven deputies suddenly walked out of Parliament as a result of an insulting exchange of words between one of them and a supporter of the Government. The members of the parliamentary bloc subsequently presented their resignations in protest against insults and restrictions directed against them in Parliament. In the by-elections of 10 June 1950 only the Istiqlal Party participated (returning five deputies), while the others boycotted the elections. While the desertion of the Istiqlal temporarily weakened the opposition, the 'bloc' continued its attack on the Government in the press and Baghdad political circles.

When the parliamentary session was due to end in 1952, the Regent consulted the leading politicians as to the kind of caretaker

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XIV.

Government which should be formed to run the elections. General Nuri thought that he should remain in power, following the British practice, and then resign in favour of the party winning the elections. Nuri's idea was sound in principle but it was rejected on the grounds that as yet there existed no free elections. Others suggested the formation of a coalition Government; but the Regent remarked that past experience was not encouraging as the leading members of a coalition Government soon quarrelled, leaving him to 'face a sudden crisis'. It was finally agreed that a 'neutral' man should be chosen to form a Government, and the Regent was requested to make the choice.

At Nuri's instance the Regent's choice fell on Mustafa al-'Umari, who formed a Government on 12 July. This choice was, however, ill advised; for, although 'Umari had distinguished himself as an able minister, he was not immune from accusations of corruption and he certainly belonged to a circle of elder politicians who had no regard for the party system. 'Umari's task was rendered the more difficult when, a fortnight later, the army assumed power in Egypt and announced sweeping social and economic reforms which gave impetus to the opposition in Baghdad to become more violent in their attack on the Government. In Lebanon the opposition parties had submitted a petition to the President of the Republic demanding his resignation, and the President, under popular pressure, resigned in September 1952. In like manner the Iraqi political parties, except Nuri's Constitutional Union Party, submitted petitions to the Regent<sup>1</sup> on 28 October, requesting him to stop interference in the political process, to grant democratic freedoms, and to introduce the principle of direct elections so that Parliament would be able to control the Government.<sup>2</sup> A prompt reply was issued by the Chief of the Royal *Diwan* in which it was admitted that reforms were necessary and that the Regent was ready to welcome any advice on this matter from any public man and organizations. It was also stated that all public men had participated in the development of the country and that the Regent was anxious to see free elections held; but that the revision of the Electoral Law on the basis of direct elections was not within his powers since it belonged to Parliament.<sup>3</sup>

The opposition parties demanded immediate revision and suggested

<sup>1</sup> Only the petition of the Socialist Nation Party was addressed to the Premier.

<sup>2</sup> For texts of the various petitions, see *Sawt al-Ahali*, 29 Oct. 1952; *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, 29 Oct. 1952; *al-Jabha ash-Sha'biya*, 29 Oct. 1952; and *al-Umma*, 29 Oct. 1952.

<sup>3</sup> See text in *ash-Sha'b*, 29 Oct. 1952.



that this could be done during the parliamentary recess by a royal decree, which might later be submitted to Parliament for approval. When 'Umari rejected this suggestion, in spite of a legal opinion on its feasibility by Abd ar-Razzaq as-Sanhuri, President of the Egyptian Council of State (in response to unofficial advice requested by Fa'iq as-Samarra'i, Vice-President of the Istiqlal Party), the parties announced on 2 November that they would boycott the forthcoming elections.

On 3 November the Regent called a meeting at the Royal *Diwan*, attended by the elder politicians and the leaders of the opposition parties. General Taha al-Hashimi, speaking on behalf of the leaders of the Istiqlal and the National Democratic parties, declared that the proposals of the opposition parties had been clearly stated in their petitions and that they wanted to know what other public men had to say. Both Nuri and Suwaydi stated that they were in favour of reforms, that corruption and irregularities were not confined to Iraq, and that the most important thing was how to achieve reforms. Chadirchi, leader of the National Democratic Party, remarked that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposals set forth in the petitions rather than other matters. Taking this remark as a reply to his statement, Suwaydi sharply rebuked Chadirchi. The latter observed that Suwaydi's emotional reply might lead to personal recriminations, and requested the Regent to put an end to a discussion of irrelevant matters. Salih Jabr addressed himself to the country's need for direct elections as a prerequisite for any constitutional reform. General Taha, in answer to a question as to why the petitions were addressed to the Regent, said that his party had deliberately done so because it was felt that the person who was directly responsible for public affairs should be addressed. He then turned to the politicians and said: 'Has there ever been a Premier free to form his Cabinet or carry out his public duties?' And addressing the Regent, he said: 'The period of Regency will come to an end within the next few months. This is an opportunity for your Royal Highness to prepare a stable regime before His Majesty assumes his powers.' Taha, himself indulging in an irrelevant discussion, added that the system of government should be immune from exploitation and personal influence and he called attention to what had happened in Egypt and other neighbouring countries. He warned his audience that similar changes were likely to happen under similar conditions. The Regent replied that ever since he had come to Iraq he heard complaints about

general elections; but in reality it was the politicians themselves who were responsible for what they had been complaining about. He pointed out that he was neither opposed to free elections nor to any advice from any person. He then directly said to Taha:

You have incorrectly accused me of using my influence . . . and, during the *Wathba* [uprising of 1948], you have written an article in which you ascribed incorrect information to me. . . .<sup>1</sup> You are warning me that what has happened in Egypt might happen in Iraq. . . .<sup>2</sup> I am not afraid of that, since I am willing to earn my living by myself and have refused to deposit money abroad. . . .

Although Midfa'i tried to ease the tension, Taha walked out and was followed by Chadirchi.<sup>3</sup>

The Regent's efforts to ease public tension were frustrated by tactical errors and by lack of confidence between the elder politicians and the leaders of the opposition parties. The outcome of the Palace meeting reflected the intense political struggle between the 'popular force' and the elder politicians; but the Regent was perhaps credited with undue share of responsibility for the failure of that meeting.

On 8 November General Nuri, leader of the Constitutional Union Party, held a press conference at his party's central office in which he announced that his party was going to participate in the general elections and distributed copies of the party platform. This advocated sweeping reforms in Government administration, and accepted the principle of direct elections provided it were adopted step by step; for the most important matter was not the principle of direct or indirect elections but the ensurance of free elections.<sup>4</sup> The other parties, having already announced their intention to boycott the elections, appointed a Co-ordinating Committee to organize the boycott. This militant attitude on the part of the opposition parties frightened 'Umari who, after reviewing the situation at a Cabinet meeting on 16 November, issued a statement in which he announced that the Government had 'accepted the principle of direct elections and

<sup>1</sup> Taha's article was in the form of answers to questions addressed to him by the editor of a Damascene newspaper, *Barada*. It was published in Iraq shortly after the uprising of 1948. See *al-Yawm*, 21 Feb. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the disestablishment of the monarchy.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the leaders of the opposition parties regarded the Regent's attack on General Taha as an attack on all, and tried to send a protest to the Royal *Diwan*; but Taha, who wisely regarded it as a personal matter, refused to do so and was satisfied by sending a personal note of protest.

<sup>4</sup> For text of the platform, see *al-Ittihad ad-Dasturi*, 9 Nov. 1952.

agreed that a committee, composed of leading experts in law and administration and representatives of the political parties, should be set up to prepare a draft [electoral] law.<sup>1</sup> He also sent a circular to all the parties on 17 November inviting them to nominate representatives of the drafting committee. The opposition parties refused to participate and reaffirmed their determination to boycott the forthcoming elections unless direct elections were adopted.

In the circumstances the fate of the 'Umari Government hung in the balance. It was taken for granted that as soon as the Government announced the date on which the elections were to begin, the opposition parties would try to organize street demonstrations. These, it will be recalled, had caused the fall of Salih Jabr in 1948 and the repudiation of the Portsmouth Treaty. Although 'Umari had no desire to suffer the same fate as Jabr, he might have been willing to withstand a street uprising if he had sufficient backing, but his position had been undermined when the Regent, doubting 'Umari's steadfastness, invited Hikmat Sulayman to form a Government. Hikmat declined, but 'Umari lost confidence and was in no mood to resist an uprising.

On 22 November the Cabinet met to decide when to announce the date on which the elections would begin.<sup>2</sup> Street demonstrations followed. Late in October the students of the College of Pharmacy and Chemistry had struck in protest against certain provisions of the college regulations. The regulations were revised by the Ministry of Health to the satisfaction of the students. On 18 November a fight occurred among the students instigated, it was believed, by the dean of the college. The students struck again on 19 November, demanding the removal of the dean, and the students of all other colleges came out on strike in sympathy. Although the dean was temporarily removed, pending investigation, the students' strike continued. It was believed that they were inspired by the Partisans of Peace and leftist elements, but on 22 November, when the Cabinet was meeting, street demonstrations definitely turned into political agitation in which the opposition parties took part and the demonstrators demanded direct elections and the fall of the 'Umari Government. Some of the demonstrators were carrying daggers and revolvers; but the police, many of whom fell victims, were unarmed except with tear gas and

<sup>1</sup> See text of the statement in *az-Zaman*, 17 Nov. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> It was also reported that the Cabinet discussed the possibility of its resignation and there was a difference of opinion on this matter.

remained so throughout the disturbances. The demonstrators fired on the police and injured some thirty of them. Only one demonstrator was killed.

Although 'Umari submitted his resignation, which was broadcast, on the afternoon of 22 November, the demonstrations on the following day were on a larger scale than the previous ones. Joined by workers from the Kazimayn factories who happened to have a half-holiday, the demonstrators broke into the U.S. Information Service offices and burned its papers and books, and set fire to the offices of the *Iraq Times* and B.O.A.C. They also assaulted a police station, set fire to it, and killed four of the policemen inside. The mob seized two of the bodies and, after mutilating them, dragged them to the street and burned them. The prestige of the Government had never before fallen so low, and the familiar leftist and anti-Government slogans were often shouted.

#### MILITARY GOVERNMENT

On the evening of 22 November, after 'Umari had submitted his resignation, the Regent called the leading politicians for consultation. The choice for forming a Government fell on Midfa'i who, hesitant to accept responsibility at this occasion, promised reply on the following day. The demonstrations of 23 November discouraged both Midfa'i and General Nuri (who was also invited to try his hand) from forming a Government. Because the police were unable to maintain order, the army was invited to intervene with orders not to fire, but General Nur ad-Din Mahmud, Chief of the General Staff, told the Regent that order could not be restored unless the army was permitted to fire. The Regent summoned the Prime Minister, the Minister of Interior (who was also Acting Minister of Defence), the Chief of the General Staff, and the Mutasarrif of Baghdad to a meeting to discuss the situation. A legal difficulty arose as to who had the power to issue an order to the army to fire. The Mutasarrif of Baghdad pointed out that, according to the *Liwa* law, he could not do so in the presence of his superior, the Minister of Interior. The Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defence stated that he could not issue an order without the authorization of the Prime Minister or the Council of Ministers. The Regent argued that he was willing to issue an order to the Chief of the General Staff; but it was pointed out that constitutionally he could not do so directly. All these legal difficulties were



raised while General Mahmud was waiting for an order to act. The logic of events inspired the Regent to invite General Mahmud, Chief of the General Staff, to form a Government, and the legal problem was solved.<sup>1</sup>

General Nur ad-Din announced on Baghdad radio (at 6 p.m.) that the Regent had entrusted him with the task of forming a Government. At 10 p.m. martial law was proclaimed and Brigadier Abd al-Mut-talib Amin, Director of Military Operations, was appointed Military Governor of Baghdad. The first arrests were made early on 24 November, the five political parties were dissolved, and seventeen newspapers were suspended. In the afternoon demonstrations, in the guise of 'funeral' processions, continued to parade the streets and cries of 'Down with Nur ad-Din Mahmud' and 'We want a popular Government under Kamil al-Chadirchi' were shouted. The army had to fire over the heads of the demonstrators and the disturbances did not stop until 6.30 p.m. Meanwhile arrests continued, amounting to about 300 leaders.<sup>2</sup> Among those detained were Chadirchi, leader of the National Democratic Party; Fa'iq al-Samarra'i, Siddiq Shanshal and several other members of the Istiqlal Party; Abd al-Wahhab Mahmud, President of the Lawyers' Association and leader of the Partisans of Peace; four members of the Popular Front and several other leading members of political parties. Night curfew was proclaimed on 24 November, and all schools and colleges were declared closed till further notice. Demonstrations were also reported in Basra, Karbala, Najaf, Kut, and Amara; but order was quickly restored in the provinces. During the three days' disturbances (22-24 November) five policemen were killed and more than 300 admitted to hospital; casualties among demonstrators were not large and damage to property was relatively slight.

On 24 November Nur ad-Din issued a communiqué embodying his reform programme. He stressed his determination to maintain law and order and promised to take steps to ease the burden of taxation, abolish college tuition, strengthen the army, and, perhaps most important in the circumstances, to set up a committee to prepare a draft Electoral Law which would enshrine the principle of direct elections so that the forthcoming elections (which he would conduct)

<sup>1</sup> Information supplied to the writer by Amir 'Abd al-Ilah, General Nur ad-Din Mahmud, and Mustafa al-'Umari.

<sup>2</sup> Arrests from among the mobs reached the high figure of 3,000; most of them were acquitted by the court martial, only two were sentenced to death, and several hundreds were imprisoned.

would be held on the basis of that principle.<sup>1</sup> On 25 November the Electoral Committee met and prepared a draft law which was subsequently issued by a royal decree on 16 December. The army was withdrawn from the capital on 13 December, but martial law was not abolished until a year later, after General Nur ad-Din had resigned and civilian rule had been re-established. Night curfew was lifted gradually until abolished on 11 December and several party leaders who had been detained were not released until after the elections were held on 17 January 1953. After the elections Nur ad-Din wished to resign, but the Regent would not accept his resignation until Parliament had met.

For two months Iraq was controlled by a Government backed by the army. Unlike the conduct of the police, the army's intervention was not to suppress legitimate demands for reform but to maintain public order. Thus Nur ad-Din could declare with pride in Parliament that he had not governed to suppress liberties but to maintain order.<sup>2</sup> He had also introduced several measures of reform to the satisfaction of the people. This benevolent rule seems to have been acknowledged even by the opposition, and the military gained popularity. This wise and well-balanced approach must have aroused the suspicion of the elder politicians, who prevailed upon the Regent (who himself had bitter experience with the military) to restore authority to civilian hands. Shortly before Parliament met the Regent casually hinted that Government should be restored to civilian rule and Nur ad-Din, who had no political ambition, tendered his letter of resignation on 22 January. Before the Regent would accept the resignation he had completed preparations for a new Government. Parliament met on 24 January, and five days later the Regent accepted Nur ad-Din's resignation in the presence of the new Premier, who at once assumed responsibility.

Nur ad-Din was appointed a member of the upper house; but the fact that he was not retained as Chief of the General Staff, as he desired, was a great disappointment to his friends who supported him when he became Prime Minister. Although Nur ad-Din was decorated, his services were perhaps not adequately rewarded by merely appointing him a senator.

<sup>1</sup> See text of the communiqué in *ash-Sha'b*, 25 Nov. 1952.

<sup>2</sup> See a statement to this effect made by General Nur ad-Din in the Senate on 28 Feb. 1953 (*Proc. Senate*, 26th Sess., 1952-3, p. 30).

## RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE

The return to civilian rule proved to be much easier than was expected, not only because it was supported by the elder politicians, but also because the military head of the Government was a man with no political ambition.

No less benevolent and honest a politician was to succeed Nur ad-Din—Senator Jamil al-Midfa'i. He was invited to form a Government on 29 January. During his three-month term of office preparations were made for the assumption of constitutional powers by, and the coronation of, King Faysal II. The constitution provided that the King should exercise his powers on reaching the age of 18; but the question was whether his age should be determined in accordance with the traditional Islamic or the Western calendar. This question had been resolved by the High Court at a meeting on 21 June 1952, when it ruled that the Western calendar should be followed. Since the King was born on 2 May 1935, the assumption of his constitutional powers should therefore be on 2 May 1953. On that day Parliament met in a joint session and the King took an oath to respect the provisions of the constitution. The Regent, in a public statement made on the previous day, declared the termination of his regency and put himself at the service of the King and country. In accordance with the Second Amendment of the constitution, he continued to serve as the heir apparent until the abolition of the monarchy.

The reign of Faysal II was both short and unhappy from his point of view. He was too young to exercise his royal prerogatives independently, and his uncle and heir apparent, the former Regent, was too close to him to let him learn from experience. As a result the political process was conducted in the same manner as it had been under the Regency, and the King had to bear the consequences of the perennial quarrel between the elder politicians, backed by the Royal *Diwan*, and the bloc of opposition parties and groups. Had the young king been left alone to choose his Prime Ministers from the party or parties that could command some popular support, his throne might have been saved. The Amir 'Abd al-Ilah's continued influence in nominating Premiers who would follow a policy dictated by the Royal *Diwan*, as seven of the ten Cabinets formed under Faysal II demonstrated, added conviction that no change in Cabinet-making was to be expected so long as the Regent and a small ring of elder politicians remained so influential. Thus one of the reasons for the

coup d'état of 14 July 1958 was a reaction against the arbitrary method of appointing Cabinets without regard to the desires and aspirations of the people. Nevertheless, during King Faysal's short reign Iraq made great strides in economic development. Never before did Iraq witness such prosperity and elaborate schemes for development as those laid down since the new oil agreements were signed by the King's first Minister, who was assassinated by an angry public five years later. These aspects of economic reconstruction, as well as the foreign relations of Iraq, will be dealt with in the following chapters.



## CHAPTER XII

### CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

SINCE its promulgation on 21 March 1925 the constitution of Iraq has twice been amended; the first time only four months after it came into force, and the second, and by far the most important, eighteen years later. In July 1958 a new constitutional instrument was promulgated as a temporary arrangement until a new constitution should be drawn up.

During the reign of Faysal I there seems to have been no need to amend or change the constitution. With his death, however, the balancing factor disappeared and disequilibrium followed. As a result leadership devolved on a group of politicians who had formerly been associated with Faysal. But personal differences among the politicians became more acute and there was no Faysal to compromise between them. It would have been possible for the politicians to handle the situation through political parties, but such parties, it will be recalled, disappeared after the termination of the mandate.

The struggle for political power was accordingly left to various politicians who made use of local conditions, at suitable opportunities, to achieve power. Parliament was weakened both by the Government control of the elections and by the threat of dissolution which was indiscriminately used by the Cabinet. Thus Parliament ceased to be a factor in the formation or fall of Cabinets.

The dilemma that Iraq faced, therefore, was how to end the life of a Cabinet harmful to the country. The King had no express right to dismiss a Cabinet, and Parliament proved incapable of passing a vote of no confidence. There remained available, therefore, only extra-constitutional, or rather unconstitutional, methods by which a Cabinet could be forced to resign. These methods were either political manoeuvres, tribal uprisings, or military coups d'état. But these violent methods proved harmful to the security of the State and the Iraqi politicians began to find means of putting an end to them, especially the military coups. As early as 1938 it was keenly felt that Parliament had been unwarrantably weakened and that the dictatorial conduct of the Cabinet should be checked. This was thought

to be the best guarantee against military coups d'état. The idea of constitutional reform, therefore, arose from purely practical considerations. When, however, the matter was first of all referred to a non-governmental committee the project was made too ambitious. The more idealist solutions were dropped, and in practice only those proposals which were of practical value in the circumstances were finally adopted.

#### PROPOSALS FOR A DRAFT AMENDMENT LAW

As early as 1938 an informal committee was set up by the Midfa'i Government with a view to making certain proposals for amending the constitution.<sup>1</sup> The Committee, whose Chairman was Naji as-Suwaydi, continued its work even after the fall of Midfa'i. Its proposals were presented to General Nuri's Government early in February 1939.<sup>2</sup> Before the Cabinet had time to consider the proposals, however, King Ghazi was killed on 4 April 1939, and his son, only five years old, became King. Thereupon Amir Abd al-Ilah, the new King's uncle, was appointed Regent by Parliament. The question of amendment was temporarily dropped and the Committee's proposals became only of academic value. It is to be noted, however, that one of the main proposals made was that the concurrence of the Senate should be obtained before the Cabinet could dissolve the Chamber of Deputies. This measure, it was rightly held, would relieve Parliament from the continual threat of dissolution, and might enable it to exercise its right of passing a vote of no confidence in an undesirable Cabinet.

The problem of Cabinet-forming, however, remained unsolved even after the Regent had begun to exercise the King's prerogatives. With all his keen interest in internal politics, the Regent's difficulties became acute when in 1941 the army's intervention caused direct conflict with the Regent himself. Parliament was rendered helpless and the situation became intolerable. In these circumstances the Iraqi Government began to reconsider the question of amending the constitution.

On 11 December 1941 the Government decided to appoint a new committee, under the chairmanship of Jamil al-Midfa'i, in order to prepare certain proposals for amendment. The members of the Committee were Senators Jamil al-Midfa'i, Mahmud Subhi ad-Daftari,

<sup>1</sup> See speeches by General Nuri and Mahmud Subhi ad-Daftari in the Senate on 9 June 1943 (*Proc. Senate*, 22nd Sess., 1943, pp. 486, 491).

<sup>2</sup> For a summary of the proposals see *az-Zaman*, 10 Feb. 1939.

Mustafa al-'Umari, and 'Umar Nazmi; Deputies Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, Abd al-Wahhab Mahmud, Jamil Abd al-Wahhab, and Abd al-Hadi ad-Dahir; Senior Officials, Antoine Shammas, Nuri al-Qadi, and Abd al-Jabbar Takarli; and two British advisers, Sir Edwin Drower and Mr C. J. Edmonds.

Before the Committee set to work the problem arose whether it was actually possible to amend those articles of the constitution which dealt with the prerogatives of the King, since Article 22 of the constitution stated that 'no modification may be introduced into the Organic Law during the Regency concerning the King's prerogatives and succession to the Throne'. Certain members of the Government, however, held the view that if the modifications in the King's prerogatives were to increase, rather than to limit them, then the modification need not be considered contrary to Article 22 of the Organic Law. The urgency of the matter, as the Prime Minister pointed out, induced the Government to refer Article 22 to the High Court in order to give a formal interpretation of the article.<sup>1</sup> The High Court decided, in its session on 24 December 1941, that if the modification were to increase the King's prerogatives, such an increase was not to be contrary to the last sentence of Article 22 of the Organic Law.<sup>2</sup>

The Committee set to work on 5 January 1943 with full liberty to formulate its own proposals.<sup>3</sup> Its deliberations were conducted in a leisurely manner and covered almost the whole Organic Law; the Committee in fact prepared a new draft Organic Law, the main proposals of which may be summarized as follows:

1. In order to avoid the recurrence of coups d'état, the Committee suggested giving Parliament the power, in an emergency, of meeting outside the capital.<sup>4</sup> It also suggested that Parliament should be pre-

<sup>1</sup> See the Prime Minister's speech in the Senate (*Proc. Senate*, 22nd Sess., 1943, p. 486).

<sup>2</sup> Three out of eight members of the High Court dissented. Two of them held that any modification, whether it increased or decreased the King's prerogatives, was prohibited by Art. 22 of the Organic Law since that article stated that no (Arabic 'ma') modification obviously meant of 'any kind'. The third dissented on the ground that the increase in the King's prerogatives would decrease the rights of the people and of Parliament which are safeguarded by the constitution. See the decision of the High Court and the dissenting opinion in *The Iraq Organic Law and its Amendments* (Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1944), pp. 118-22.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the members wanted to know beforehand the viewpoints of the Cabinet as to the amendment. The Cabinet, in answer, declared that it had no definite proposals and that the Committee had full liberty to formulate its own. (From an interview with one of the members of the Committee.)

<sup>4</sup> The need for Parliament to have the power of meeting outside the capital was

vented from passing Acts of amnesty on behalf of individuals who had taken part in violent action against the State. These two measures, as will be seen, were included in the final Draft Amendment Law.

2. A proposal was made to limit the qualifications for membership in the Senate to those who had been Prime Ministers, ministers, senior military officers, or civil servants who had been at least five years in service, and deputies with at least five years' membership of the Chamber of Deputies. This proposal was not included in the final draft law.

3. It was suggested that the minimum number of Cabinet ministers should be seven, including the Prime Minister. A number of deputy ministers was also suggested, but the Committee was against the principle of appointing ministers without portfolio. This proposal with the exception of the last reservation was included in the final draft law.

4. Finally, the Committee suggested a permissive provision to replace the special courts dealing with religious laws of personal status by civil courts. It was suggested, however, that the present regime should continue until such a time as the Iraqi Government saw fit for their incorporation in the civil courts. This proposal was probably the most progressive one made, but it was opposed by a considerable number of the members of Parliament and was not adopted.

The Committee's deliberations lasted for two months; the first meeting took place on 5 January 1943, and the last on 5 March 1943. The proposals, in the form of a new draft Organic Law, were communicated to the Cabinet at once, which in turn sent them to Parliament on 20 March 1943.

#### THE WORK OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

On 23 March 1943 the draft Organic Law was introduced into the Chamber of Deputies. After its first reading in the Iraqi Parliament any draft law is usually referred to a standing committee which does the preparatory work and makes its proposals. Since there was no standing committee on constitutional matters the Chamber of Deputies appointed a Special Committee of twenty-five deputies to consider the draft Organic Law.

felt during the coup d'état of May 1941, when the Regent wished Parliament to meet in Basra and his Government to move there while the Rashid Ali Government was in Baghdad.



The Special Committee set to work on 27 March, and its deliberations lasted for almost two months. The Committee raised an objection to the way in which the whole subject had been approached, claiming that it amounted almost to a new constitution rather than a Draft Amendment Law. The committee held that if the object was to draw up a new draft Organic Law, then the work was rather one for a Constituent Assembly, which had originally enacted the Iraq Organic Law, than for Parliament. If the object, on the other hand, was to amend the existing Organic Law, then the draft should be in the form of a Draft Amendment Law. The latter was, in fact, the form which was adopted.

Owing to pressure of time, the Government decided to speed up the work. The Parliament which began in 1939 was due to dissolve in 1943. It was feared that there might be a long debate in Parliament before the Draft Amendment Law was passed and that the Chamber of Deputies would be automatically dissolved, having completed its term of four years, before the debate had ended. In order, therefore, to avoid disagreement between the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, in their discussions of the draft law, the Government decided to appoint an informal joint committee consisting of one senator,<sup>1</sup> and two deputies,<sup>2</sup> who were charged with the duty of preparing a final Draft Amendment Law acceptable to both Houses of Parliament.

The Joint Committee held several informal meetings and discussed the whole project of amendment anew. It decided that, while Parliament had the right, under Article 119, to amend the Organic Law, such an amendment might not be of such an extent as to make any considerable alteration in the fundamental principles of the constitution as laid down by the Constituent Assembly. Further modifications were therefore made and the final Draft Amendment Law covered the following main points:

1. A solution was found to the question of succession to the throne. The Organic Law left the question of succession to be regulated by statute, but no such law had yet been enacted, and it was owing to King Faysal II's youth that the matter was brought up for consideration again. It was decided that if there were no heir apparent to the throne, an heir presumptive should be nominated so that there should be no interruption in the succession. It was further held that since the reigning family of Iraq was descended from the late King Husayn of

<sup>1</sup> Ibrahim Kamal.    <sup>2</sup> Tawfiq as-Suwaydi and Abd al-Wahhab Mahmud.

Hijaz, some other member of that family should be nominated in the absence of an heir apparent. Thus it was that the 'ablest'<sup>1</sup> Iraqi male heir of the eldest son of King Husayn, Amir Abd al-Ilah, the former Regent, became heir presumptive until a male son should be born to King Faysal II.

2. The King's prerogatives were increased by granting him the power to dismiss the Prime Minister.

3. The number of the senators was left indefinite,<sup>2</sup> but was not to exceed one-fourth of the number of the deputies. Furthermore, it was decided that Parliament, in case of an emergency, could meet outside the capital. A senator or a deputy, with the concurrence of the House to which he belonged, might accept a position in the Government service in a special capacity, but for two years only.

4. In order to make it more difficult for a Cabinet to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies, the members of a dissolved Chamber were given the right to demand the payment of their salaries for the rest of the parliamentary year. This pecuniary compensation, it was held, would discourage the Cabinet from resorting to frequent dissolutions of Parliament.

5. Parliament was prevented from passing an act to pardon individuals who had been convicted of crimes involving violence against the State or the Government, or attempts to coerce the King or Government.

6. It was decided to increase the number of Cabinet ministers, without specifying a maximum, provided that the minimum number should not be less than seven, including the Prime Minister. A number of deputy ministers and ministers without portfolio were also added, provided there should be need for them.

7. Finally, a general provision was added by virtue of which any constitutional practice might be adopted from foreign countries by resolution of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in joint session, provided it was not contrary to the Organic Law (Art. 124).

#### DISCUSSION IN PARLIAMENT

The Draft Amendment Law was debated and passed in the Chamber of Deputies at a single meeting which took place on 27 May 1943,

<sup>1</sup> The word 'ablest' is the nearest translation of the Arabic word *arshad*, which has the dual meaning of maturity and wisdom.

<sup>2</sup> Before the Second Amendment the number of members could not be more than twenty.

and lasted five hours. The debate began with a motion put forward by Prime Minister Nuri as-Sa'id, who urged the Chamber to proceed quickly with the debate since Parliament was soon due to dissolve. Discussion on the general principles of the draft, however, took a relatively long time, chiefly because the deputies talked in a general fashion about the nature of constitutions and their amendment. The reasons why amendment was necessary were well explained by Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, a former Prime Minister, who referred to the dangers of coups d'état and the various 'tragedies' which took place during the reign of King Ghazi.<sup>1</sup> Other members expressed more or less the same points of view.

Probably the only point which provoked a lively debate was the article empowering the King to dismiss his Prime Minister. Jamil Abd al-Wahhab, after a long and elaborate speech on the nature of constitutions, was the first to defend this right on the grounds that 'he who has the right to appoint, has the right to dismiss'.<sup>2</sup> He pointed out that such a rule has already existed in the constitutions of Egypt, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Germany, and even of Britain. The King, however, he continued, could not exercise that power if the Cabinet was supported by a majority in Parliament, unless he ordered a dissolution of Parliament and the new elections returned deputies who supported him. If the new elections returned a majority supporting the old Cabinet, Abd al-Wahhab maintained that the King should take into consideration the wishes of the electorate.

Tawfiq as-Suwaydi asserted that the term 'appointment' in the Iraqi Organic Law was always construed to mean 'selection', and consequently it did not imply the idea of dismissal. He also pointed out that in Great Britain the King cannot dismiss the Cabinet.<sup>3</sup>

Nuri, in reply, again advocated the need for the right of dismissal at that stage of the constitutional development of Iraq, owing to the fact that Parliament had not yet been able to exercise its right of passing a vote of no confidence in a Cabinet. But should circumstances change, the new power of the King might become obsolete by lapse of time as it had in Great Britain.<sup>4</sup> Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, when the debate on the general principles had almost ended, raised the objection

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 42nd Sess., 1943, pp. 380-1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 378.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 380-1. It is to be noted that Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, when he was Prime Minister in 1929, defended the principle that the King could not dismiss the Prime Minister by refusing to resign when he was asked to do so.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 389.

which he already made during the meeting of the Special Committee concerning the modification of the rights of the King during a regency. He contended that an event of such importance ought not to have been undertaken. He was of the opinion that the whole question of amendment should have been postponed until a more favourable moment after the war.<sup>1</sup>

The debate on the general principles was cut short by a motion to stop further discussion. The Draft Amendment Law was then taken up article by article and was discussed and carried in rather a hurry. Only Article 12, concerning the King's new prerogative to dismiss a Prime Minister, was debated further in any detail. At this stage, the Prime Minister moved an amendment so that the article should read, 'The King, in case of necessity and when it conforms to public interest, can dismiss the Prime Minister.' Some deputies opposed the Prime Minister's new motion. The Prime Minister pointed out that there were senators who objected to the clause as it stood without qualification. Other deputies, such as Abd al-Wahhab Mahmud, saw no harm in the Prime Minister's motion and urged its acceptance. The article, as amended, was eventually carried, as were all the other articles of the draft. It is to be noted that the Draft Amendment Law was debated in haste and the pressure of time was largely responsible for its being enacted in a simplified form. The amendment was carried by a unanimous vote of all deputies present, i.e. 78 to nil.

The Draft Amendment Law was informally debated in the Senate at the same time as it was being debated in the Chamber of Deputies, but the formal debate did not begin until 9 June 1943. As was the case in the Chamber of Deputies, the draft had been referred to a special committee on 30 May; the debate began on 9 June and the draft was passed in one meeting. The Regent, who was interested in the Senate debate, attended in person.

Before the debate began, the Prime Minister gave an elaborate account of the origin of the movement for an amendment. He declared that the late King Faysal I had in mind an amendment to the constitution and had he lived longer he would have certainly urged the Second Amendment himself. The Prime Minister gave details of his own early career and experiences during the Ottoman regime which had led him to believe in the necessity for amending the constitution. He also gave an account of the steps taken since 1938, of the favourable attitude of the Regent, and of the advice of some responsible

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 390-1.



Iraqi politicians with whom he discussed the details of the procedure to be followed until the draft was completed. In referring to the article which empowered the King to dismiss the Prime Minister, he declared that the Regent's wish was rather that the article should be framed briefly and not qualified by lengthy conditions. Some of the Iraqi politicians, however, he added, were not in favour of this and argued that it would involve the King in partisan issues. The Prime Minister's point of view was that the present state of affairs needed some such power, but that when conditions changed this power would become obsolete. The Prime Minister added that as a compromise the article was now qualified by a sentence to the effect that the King would dismiss the Prime Minister only in case of necessity and if it were in conformity with public interest.<sup>1</sup>

Opposition to this article was more apparent and more forceful in the Senate than in the Chamber of Deputies. Senator Mahmud Subhi ad-Daftari was probably the most ardent opponent. Throughout his various speeches two main reasons appeared for his opposition. In the first place, he maintained that Article 22 of the Organic Law expressly stipulated that no modification whatsoever should be made in the King's prerogatives during a regency. But ad-Daftari, who was also a member of the High Court, gave a dissenting opinion. The second reason for his opposition was that war-time conditions, when freedom of speech was not fully assured, made it the wrong moment for initiating an amendment.<sup>2</sup>

An entirely different kind of opposition came from Senator 'Umar Nazmi, who did not object to the original article which empowered the King to dismiss the Prime Minister, but who objected to the qualifying clause added by the Chamber of Deputies. He desired the King to have the express right, unqualified by any condition, to dismiss his Prime Minister. He also voted against the draft since he considered that there should be an article to the effect that if a considerable number of ministers tendered their resignations, leaving less than seven (the legal minimum) in office, the Cabinet should be considered to have automatically resigned.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, there was some discussion on who would decide when it was a case of 'necessity', and what was meant by 'public interest'. Senator Ibrahim Kamal expressed some doubt that the vagueness of these terms might lead once more to disagreement between the King

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Senate*, 22nd Sess., 1943, pp. 485-900.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 490-3, 493-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 497-8, 504-6.

and the Cabinet.<sup>1</sup> Most of the senators, however, thought that the King alone could decide on these points.

The Draft Amendment Law, in spite of the opposition of certain Senators, was passed by a majority of 12 to 2 among those present.<sup>2</sup>

According to Article 119, the Chamber of Deputies had to be dissolved as soon as a draft amendment was passed, and new elections had to take place so that the new Parliament could finally decide either to confirm the decision of the former Parliament or to reject it. The Chamber of Deputies was accordingly dissolved on 9 June 1943, and elections took place for the new Chamber in September.

#### APPRAISAL OF THE AMENDMENT LAW

The main reason which prompted the Iraqi Government to amend the constitution was to solve problems of an emergency character, such as the dismissal of an undesirable Cabinet, or fundamental questions of long standing, such as the need for strengthening Parliament. The first kind of emergency has not arisen since the constitution was amended; while the latter can only be answered by Parliament regaining its confidence. It is to be noted, however, that Parliament could never be strengthened simply by weakening the Cabinet; the problem should rather have been solved by amending the Electoral Law in such a manner as to give full freedom to the electorate in choosing their representatives. Neither the Electoral Law of 1946 nor that of 1952 have fulfilled this condition and, therefore, the general elections of 1947, 1948, 1952, and 1954 failed to return as strong a representative body as the nation had hoped for. Furthermore, an endeavour should have been made to educate the electorate itself by raising its cultural and social standards. However, raising the standard of the electorate is not only a matter of law, but also of time and of careful attention during the transition period.

There was much discussion, it will be recalled, of the relative value of the article giving the King power to dismiss his Prime Minister. The only justification given was that it would avoid the recurrence of coups d'état. While the Regent had not resorted to such a measure, it undoubtedly provided a legal method for ending the life of an undesirable Cabinet. It may be noted that three Cabinets<sup>3</sup> fell because

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 511.

<sup>2</sup> See text of the Second Amendment Law in *The Iraqi Organic Law and Its Amendments* (Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1944), pp. 72-88.

<sup>3</sup> The Suwaydi (1946), Jabr (1948), and 'Umari Cabinets (1952).

they were threatened by the Senate and public opinion rather than because they actually lost the confidence of the Chamber of Deputies, and it may be argued that these three Cabinets might not have resigned if they had not been afraid of dismissal by the Regent.

The Second Amendment Law added the following article to the constitution:

*Article 124.* Constitutional methods which are neither mentioned in, not forbidden by, this law, but are practised by constitutional States, may be adopted by decision of Parliament in joint Assembly, and observed as constitutional rules.

The reason for adding this article was to counteract the rigidity of Articles 118 and 119. The writer had the opportunity of discussing the interpretation of Article 124 with some members of the Parliamentary Committee on amendment and they seem to contend that their aim was to modify the rigidity of the constitution. Sir Edwin Drower, however, is of the opinion that Article 124 rendered the Organic Law more rigid by permitting the adoption of foreign constitutional practices (which could easily have been adopted by an ordinary law), since their removal could not be made except under Article 119. While the writer shares his opinion that any foreign constitutional practice, if not contrary to the provisions of the Organic Law, could have been adopted by an ordinary law, he does not see why, if it was adopted under Article 124 (by joint assembly of both House of Parliament), it could not have been removed or amended in the same way in which it was adopted. Foreign constitutional practices need not have been regarded as part of the Iraqi Organic Law and, therefore, were not subject to Article 119.<sup>1</sup>

The Second Amendment Law did not touch certain articles of the Organic Law which are either ambiguous or have become obsolete. Certain articles, such as 26, 63, and even 124, which have been newly added, are ambiguous. Article 118 and the first clause of Article 119, dealing with the way of amending the Organic Law during the period 1925-30, were no longer necessary and should have been deleted.

Since the abolition of the constitution the whole question of amendment had become of academic value. A provisional constitution of thirty articles was issued on 26 July 1958, abolishing the previous

<sup>1</sup> For full discussion of the interpretation of Art. 124 and the rigidity of the Iraqi Constitution, see M. Khadduri, 'Has the Iraqi Constitution become less or more Rigid after the Second Amendment?', *Judicial Journal*, May 1945, pp. 46-54.

Organic Law and proclaiming Iraq a republic. It entrusted the powers of the President to a Council of Sovereignty, but the real executive power remained with the Cabinet. The latter was also empowered to legislate by decree with the approval of the Council of Sovereignty. It does not seem probable that the new constitution, when it is drawn up, will completely change the character of the previous constitutional structure, nor is it in the interests of Iraq that her past experience in political processes should be forgotten. The new regime may well be based on the aspirations of the new rulers of Iraq as well as on the accumulated tradition and 'trials and errors' which Iraq has experienced during the past thirty years.

#### REVIVAL OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Enlightened Iraqi politicians deplored the increasingly authoritarian tendencies in the executive since the disappearance of political parties.<sup>1</sup> Since the constitution was amended with a view to controlling the executive, it was keenly felt that the time had come for reviving political parties. In his speech on 27 December 1945, the Regent, among other things, promised the formation of political parties and freedom for their activities in order to ensure social and economic progress.<sup>2</sup>

When the Suwaydi Government was formed in February 1946, it granted permission for the formation of new political parties. Five parties were officially formed on 20 April 1946.

The new parties were formed mainly on the basis of domestic issues. The *Istiqlal* (Independence) Party, which advocated a strong Arab nationalist policy and moderate social reform, was right wing. Most of its members were either former members of the Muthanna Club or sympathizers with the Rashid Ali coup d'état. A number of them were detained during the last war in internment camps. They distrusted foreign influence and advocated neutralism in the East-West conflict. The party was led by Muhammad Mahdi Kubba, formerly Vice-President of the Muthanna Club. The party's official organ was *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*.

A centre party was the *Ahrar* (Liberal) Party, formed by the Suwaydi group, which advocated moderate social reform. After the fall of the Suwaydi Government, leadership of the party was first assumed by Sa'd Salih, since Tawfiq as-Suwaydi resigned from the

<sup>1</sup> See statements to this effect in *al-Bilad*, 1, 13, 16, and 19 Nov. 1944.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 253 above.



party, and then by Abd al-Wahhab Mahmud, after Sa'd Salih's death in 1948. The official daily paper of the party was *Sawt al-Ahrar*.

The National Democratic (al-Watani al-Demoqrati) Party, left of centre, mainly comprised former Ahali members, led by Kamil al-Chadirchi. The party advocated moderate socialist principles, but the main emphasis was laid on democracy rather than socialism. The prominent members of the party were Chadirchi, Muhammad Hadid, and Husayn Jamil. The official daily paper was *Sawt al-Ahali*.

Farther to the left was the National Union (Ittihad al-Watani) Party, led by Abd al-Fattah Ibrahim, a former Ahali member.<sup>1</sup> The party, though professing more avowed socialist ideas than the National Democratic Party, laid even more emphasis on democracy. Its organ, *as-Siyassa*, was suppressed by the 'Umari Government in 1946.

The Sha'b (People's) Party, led by Aziz Sharif, laid more emphasis on socialism than the former two parties, and proved to be the most outspoken in attacking British imperialism and favouring Russian foreign policy. Its official daily paper, *al-Watan*, was also suppressed by the 'Umari Government.

There was an immediate favourable response to the formation of these parties, which alarmed both the elder politicians and those with vested interests. The parties soon realized that every new Cabinet, while it gave lip service to the value of political parties, in fact tightened control of their activities. The reason, it seems, was that the five parties represented in the main the younger generation, since those with vested interests and the elder politicians did not form an official political party. But behind the scenes they influenced every Government to limit the activities of the five parties. The Palestine War (1948-9), which necessitated declaration of martial law in the country, was used for the further curtailment of political activities. Two parties, the People's and the National Union, were suppressed by the Jabr Government on the grounds of their radical socialist ideas. Two other parties, the Liberal and National Democratic, having found the futility of struggling in a rigidly authoritarian regime, agreed on 1 December 1948 temporarily to suspend their activities until circumstances were more favourable.<sup>2</sup> Only the Istiqlal

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 70-71 above.

<sup>2</sup> For the two parties' official statements to this effect, see *Sawt al-Ahrar*, 3 Dec. 1948; and *Sawt al-Ahali*, 3 Dec. 1948. The National Democratic Party resumed its activity on 25 Mar. 1950.

Party continued to survive, while the elder politicians, representing various shades of opinion, formed a number of groupings which gravitated around certain leading personalities. In order to keep a balance between the left and right parties, General Nuri, who was prepared to admit the value of political parties, formed in 1949 the Ittihad ad-Dasturi (Constitutional Union) Party, comprising members of the old and the younger generation. Nuri tried to enlist the co-operation of the Istiqlal Party and exchanged letters with its leader for possible collaboration; but this party, as has been seen, refused to collaborate with him.<sup>1</sup> The United Popular Front, combining the Shabibi-Farisi grouping with several other politicians, led by General Taha al-Hashimi, was formed in 1951. This proved to be a loose organization which was soon dissolved by internal conflict. Sami Shawkat, a former supporter of General Nuri, organized the Islah (Reform) Party; but this party, in view of its leader's inability to make progress, merged with the newly formed Socialist Nation Party, led by Salih Jabr, in June 1951. Although this party claimed to be socialistic, it was hardly to be differentiated from the Constitutional Union Party save by the personal differences between the leaders of the two parties.<sup>2</sup> Ever since the repudiation of the Portsmouth Treaty and the overthrow of the Jabr Government, to which Nuri gave his support, Jabr set to work independently to realize his cherished ambition to become a national leader. The intense rivalry between these two great elder politicians, which might have stabilized the precarious position of the party system, was ended by Nuri's suppression of all political parties in 1954 and by Jabr's sudden collapse from a heart-attack in 1957, while making a speech in the Senate criticizing Nuri's policy.<sup>3</sup>

Although the parties had been formally abolished, political groups remained in existence, gravitating around the leaders of the opposition parties. An alignment between the leaders of the Istiqlal and National Democratic parties was designed to form a Congress Party, composed of the leaders of opposition parties. When permission to form such a party was refused in 1956, a secret committee was organized in 1957, composed of all the opposition groups (including the Communists) to co-ordinate the activities of the opposition. This new

<sup>1</sup> See p. 274 above. For text of the letters see *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, 18 Sept. 1949.

<sup>2</sup> See *Programme of the Socialist Nation Party* (Baghdad, Rabita Press, 1951).

<sup>3</sup> As a cartoonist hostile to Nuri sketched the scene in the Senate, Nuri, addressing the other members, said: 'Is there any other speaker?', and he found them all to have succumbed to silence.

alignment came to be known as the National Union Front, a secret organization which submitted petitions to the King requesting him to dismiss Nuri's Government and grant the democratic freedoms permitted under the constitution.

The Government of the coup d'état of 1958, in which the opposition parties were represented, has promised to restore freedom to political parties, but at the time of writing no formal permission had yet been given; if full freedom were given, the elder politicians would of course resume their political activities. It may well take a very long time before a multiple party system will be enabled to resume its operation under a democratic or semi-democratic regime.

#### NEW ELECTORAL LAWS

The idea of revising the Electoral Law goes back to 1935 when Yasin al-Hashimi was swept into power after the tribal uprisings in the Middle Euphrates. It was keenly felt that the Electoral Law had permitted too rigid control of the elections by the Government and did not allow adequate representation of the people. On 24 June 1935 the Prime Minister proposed to the Minister of Justice to form a committee to study the law in force and make proposals of revision. On 4 July a committee met under the chairmanship of Muhammad Zaki, Minister of Justice, and held one sitting in which it was decided that there was decidedly a need for revision in order to ensure adequate representation. But no action was taken.

In 1940, when General Nuri was in power, the Minister of Interior, 'Umar Nazmi, prepared a new draft Electoral Law in which the representation of trade unions was provided for and the division of the country into smaller constituencies, each to elect one deputy. On 1 January 1940 the draft was sent to the Minister of Justice to be studied by a legal committee. The Minister of Justice, in consultation with Sir Edwin Drower, the legal adviser, objected to the principle of the representation of trade unions on the grounds that it contravened the constitution, which laid down the general principle of the representation of one deputy for every 20,000 persons. The matter did not proceed further than that.

In 1941, when General Nuri was again in power and had been able to amend the constitution, he took a keen interest in revising the Electoral Law. On 9 November 1943 he issued an order forming a new committee, composed of politicians representing various shades of opinion, to prepare a new draft Electoral Law. The Committee,

whose Chairman was Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, was composed of Nasrat al-Farisi, Rida ash-Shabibi, Kamil Chadirchi, Mustafa al-'Umari, Sadiq al-Bassam, Sir Edwin Drower, and C. J. Edmonds. The Committee held fourteen sittings between 20 November 1943 and 30 April 1944. The old Electoral Law of 1924 was closely examined on the basis of earlier proposals and past experience. Nuri, in a letter dated 21 November 1943 to Suwaydi, Chairman of the Committee, stated that in submitting a draft Electoral Law to the Committee, he did not intend to limit the freedom of the Committee; but he merely submitted it for their consideration. He suggested, however, consideration of the possibility of giving representation to trade unions; of substituting direct for indirect elections for persons who had received high school education; and the introduction of the principle of nomination.

In the third session of the Committee, on 4 December 1943, Chadirchi suggested the substitution of direct for indirect elections without qualification. Sadiq al-Bassam, who rejected the proposal, thought the election returns would then be in favour of the tribes, since they constitute the majority of the country. He accordingly suggested dividing the country into two main divisions for the purpose of the elections: the tribesmen and the city-dwellers. He thought that direct elections might be tried out among the city-dwellers. Both proposals were rejected, and the principle of indirect elections was reasserted.

The principle of the representation of trade unions was discussed at the ninth session on 30 January 1944, but was dismissed as contrary to the constitution. If such a principle were to be adopted, the constitution would first have to be amended to permit the representation of groups numbering less than 20,000 persons.

Finally, the principle of literacy as a prerequisite for voting or the election of a deputy was suggested by Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, Chairman of the Committee, in the tenth session on 21 March 1944. The majority attacked this principle since the great majority of the population is illiterate; but in spite of the opposition of Chadirchi, C. J. Edmonds and Sir Edwin Drower approved the principle of literacy as necessary for any candidate for election.

It is to be noted that the more idealistic principles were dropped and only the more practical ones were adopted. It may be said that three important innovations in the new law were accepted as it passed the Committee: (1) the requirement that the date of the election must



be publicly announced at a fixed interval in advance (previously instructions, with the Government lists of nominees, were often sent only the night before); (2) the requirement that candidates must announce their candidature publicly in advance (previously candidates either lobbied the Minister of the Interior or just waited hoping that their social status, or nuisance value, would bring them on to the Government list); (3) the establishment of small—nearly all one-, a few two-member—constituencies instead of the *liwa'* constituencies which had between two and fifteen members. This was intended to make it more difficult for the Government in power to impose perfect strangers on a district.

After the fall of General Nuri's Government (3 June 1944) the draft Electoral Law was shelved for about two years by the Pachachi Government, which showed no interest in completing the work of its predecessor. In February 1946 Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, Chairman of the Committee which prepared the draft Electoral Law, formed a Government and decided to present the draft law to Parliament for legislation.

On 8 May 1946 the draft Electoral Law was discussed by the Chamber of Deputies. Salman ash-Shaykh Da'ud, while he approved indirect elections, proposed to grant all graduates of colleges and universities the right of voting as secondary electors. The proposal was rejected.<sup>1</sup> Abd al-Karim al-Uzri revived the proposal of direct elections, but this also was rejected.<sup>2</sup> Razuq Ghannam, a Christian deputy, proposed to raise the number of religious minorities from four to six for each of the Christians and Jews. The proposal was adopted.<sup>3</sup> Another proposal was adopted which dropped the principle of literacy as a prerequisite for secondary electors. The debate in the Chamber of Deputies lasted for four sessions (8 May–15 May 1946), but most of it consisted of an attack on the ways and means of applying the old Law rather than the principles of the new Law. Rida ash-Shabibi and Ibrahim Attar Bashi saw no defects in the old Law and criticized the various Governments which misapplied the Law.<sup>4</sup> Nazif ash-Shawi warned the Chamber that the fate of the new Law would be the same as the old if the Government did not abstain from controlling the elections.<sup>5</sup>

In the Senate the draft Law was considered in one session, on 23 May 1946, and was approved without alteration. The Law was

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 10th Sess., 1945–6, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 347.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 363–4, 390.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 360–3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 351–2.

immediately sent to the Regent for signature and was approved on 27 May.<sup>1</sup>

Two elections have been held under the new Electoral Law, in 1947 and 1948. The first, organized by General Nuri, who originally sponsored the preparation of the draft Law, was an improvement on former elections in permitting a little freedom in the cities; but the elections in the rural and tribal sections were probably as rigidly controlled as in former elections. In the 1948 elections there was less complaint than in the previous year; but very soon, when it was discovered that the Government could still control the elections, a movement in favour of direct elections was set in motion.

On 26 February 1951 Abd al-Karim al-Uzri presented a motion in the Chamber of Deputies to enact a new draft Electoral Law on the basis of direct elections.<sup>2</sup> To counteract this motion Muhammad Jawad al-Khatib, inspired by the Government, moved on 13 March that the existing Electoral Law should be revised on the basis of past experiences and new circumstances.<sup>3</sup> After a long discussion on the two motions, which lasted four sessions of Parliament (27 March–3 April 1951), the latter motion was adopted. On 28 June 1952 a revised draft Electoral Law, in which certain improvements to ensure free elections (including the reduction of the number of Jewish representatives from six to one) were introduced, was presented to Parliament. After a brief discussion, despite criticism that the Draft Law avoided the issue of direct elections, it was accepted by the majority of both Houses of Parliament.<sup>4</sup> This law was unsatisfactory to the opposition parties who, it will be recalled, began to agitate against the 'Umari Government and demanded that the new elections should be held on the basis of direct elections. The uprising of 1952, partly inspired by the parties' insistence on direct elections, resulted in the promulgation of an electoral decree, in which the principle of direct elections was enshrined, on 16 December 1952. The general elections, sponsored by the military Government of General Nur ad-Din Mahmud, were held in January 1953. Although they were a great improvement over their predecessors, the elections were criticized in Parliament as having been as rigidly controlled,<sup>5</sup> which demonstrated

<sup>1</sup> For text of the Law see *Iraq Government Gazette*, 8 June 1946, pp. 1–8.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 12th Sess., 1950–1, pp. 248–50.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 305–6.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 12th Sess., 1951–2, pp. 563–72; *Proc. Senate*, 25th Sess., 1951–2, pp. 393–405.

<sup>5</sup> Sayyid Abd al-Mahdi went so far as to declare in the Senate soon after the

that completely free elections were not only a matter of law but also of time and education until the majority of the people are able to exercise franchise rights independently. Two more general elections were held in 1954 and 1955; the former was perhaps the least and the latter the most rigidly controlled. The whole question of electoral laws and elections has become an academic one until the promulgation of the new constitution.

elections that the experiment of 'direct elections [proved to be] direct designations' (*Proc. Senate*, 26th Sess., 1952-3, p. 31).

## CHAPTER XIII

### FOREIGN POLICY

THE emancipation of Iraq from the mandates system fulfilled one of the fundamental aspirations of the Iraqi nationalists, namely the rise of an Arab country to statehood with a seat in a world assembly. But this remarkable achievement, important as it was from the international viewpoint, was regarded by the nationalists only as a step toward the realization of their ultimate national objective, the independence and unity of the whole Arab world.

After Iraq's rise to statehood, the Iraqi nationalists were divided into two schools of thought on the foreign policy to be followed by the new Arab State. There was, in the first place, the pan-Arab school which advocated an aggressive foreign policy in order to help the other Arab countries in their struggle for independence. The pan-Arabs saw no hope in the independent struggle of each Arab country against imperialism and urged the Iraqi Government to give them active support. The other, or the moderate school, advocated an independent foreign policy for Iraq on the basis of her peculiar internal circumstances, such as the existence of an important Kurdish minority and Iraq's special treaty relationship with Great Britain. This school, often referred to as the Iraqi school, pledged co-operation with the other Arab countries but only on the understanding that each would maintain its separate identity and independence.

King Faysal I saw certain fundamental weaknesses in each school. As an Arab who took active part in the various stages of the Arab nationalist movement, in Istanbul, Hijaz, and Syria, he naturally sympathized with the pan-Arab school and hoped to achieve the independence and unity of all the Arab countries. But as the architect of the Iraqi State he hesitated to follow the hazardous foreign policy advocated by the pan-Arab school, which would expose Iraq to dangers. Faysal's foreign policy, accordingly, may be stated to have been based on four fundamental principles which became the foundation of Iraq's foreign policy.

First, Faysal genuinely believed and worked for an Anglo-Arab friendship. In his treaty negotiations with Britain he had at no time



been prepared to sacrifice Arab rights; but he proceeded on the sincere assumption that British and Arab interests were not essentially irreconcilable. He regarded the Treaty of 1930 as the corner-stone for the safeguarding of Iraq's independence and the basis of Anglo-Arab friendship. Furthermore, he urged co-operation with Britain in order to help liberate the other Arab countries which were still struggling for their freedom.

Secondly, Faysal advocated a 'good-neighbour' policy with all the Middle East countries. Faced with a number of difficulties with his neighbours (dynastic rivalry with Ibn Sa'ud and unsettled frontiers with Persia), he tried to conciliate them and convert them into good, rather than hostile, neighbours. He visited Turkey and Persia in 1931 and laid the foundation for future understanding with these countries which culminated, after his death, in the signing of the Sa'dabad Pact.<sup>1</sup> He met his rival Ibn Sa'ud in the Persian Gulf and impressed him with his ideal of putting national before personal interests.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, though proud of his own achievement in Iraq, Faysal never overlooked his obligations towards the Arabs in Syria and Palestine. He was, it is true, unable to give any active support to these countries in their struggle for freedom; but he often sent notes to France and England pleading for sympathy with the national aspirations of Syria and Palestine. His approach was conspicuously mild, because he realized the weakness of his position and that the time had not yet come to render any effective support to the neighbouring Arabic countries.

Fourthly, Faysal, who was King of Syria before Iraq, always hoped for an eventual union between the two countries. He believed, with the moderate school, that an Arab union should be achieved only by a gradual development of the various Arab countries towards independence and that they then might voluntarily join into a federal union. Whether Faysal had in mind an all-Arab union or merely a Fertile Crescent union is difficult to determine; but he certainly did aspire to achieve in his lifetime a union between Iraq and the entire Syrian coast.

Faysal's ideas and aspirations, especially his 'good-neighbour' policy, were shared by all his ministers; but his conception of Anglo-Arab co-operation commanded respect only among his intimate associates such as General Nuri as-Sa'id, General Ja'far al-Askari, and Rustum Haydar. Yasin al-Hashimi, leader of the Ikha Party,

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 330-2 below.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 323 below.

while he admitted the value of British friendship, was more enthusiastic about Faysal's Arab policy, Rashid Ali, Hikmat Sulayman, and Abu 't-Timman opposed Anglo-Arab co-operation and often denounced British 'imperialism'. Independent politicians such as Midfa'i, Ali Jawdat, and Tawfiq as-Suwaydi, who represented the moderate school, were always in favour of Anglo-Arab co-operation.

After Faysal's death the leaders of Iraq, though they often made contradictory statements on foreign policy, followed in the main Faysal's ideas on foreign policy. The frontier dispute with Persia was finally settled,<sup>1</sup> and Faysal's 'good-neighbour' policy with Turkey and Persia bore fruit in the signing of the Sa'dabad Pact. The principle of close co-operation with the other Arab countries made further strides after Faysal's death, which not only resulted in the signing of the treaty of Arab brotherhood and alliance with Saudi Arabia and Yaman, but also culminated in the establishment of the Arab League.<sup>2</sup> Viewed in retrospect, these accomplishments have, within the span of a decade, advanced the Arab cause of unity and independence far beyond what was contemplated at the time of Faysal's death.

With regard to Iraq's relations with Great Britain, the Treaty of Alliance of 30 June 1930 was regarded as the corner-stone for Anglo-Iraqi co-operation. Though the treaty was concluded before 1932, it is of value to discuss its background and provisions before we turn to a discussion of Iraq's foreign relations since 1932.

#### THE ANGLO-IRAQI TREATY OF 1930

The Treaty of 1922, which was concluded on the basis of the League mandate, proved to be an unsatisfactory compromise between Britain and Iraq. The Iraqi nationalists, it will be recalled,<sup>3</sup> were not prepared to accept any plan short of complete independence and the abrogation of the mandate. 'The mere terms "Mandatory" and "Mandate"'<sup>4</sup> said Sir Percy Cox, British High Commissioner in Iraq, 'were anathema to them from the first.' Various attempts were made to re-define Anglo-Iraqi relations, without fundamentally altering the obligations of Great Britain towards the League of Nations, such as the treaties of 1926 and 1927. These satisfied neither the Iraqi Government nor the nationalists, who aimed at nothing less than the abrogation of the mandate system itself. The British treaties were deemed by the

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 324-30 below.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 335-443 below.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter I, pp. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Florence Bell, ed., *Letters of Gertrude Bell* (London, 1927), ii. 235.

nationalists not only to have impeded the realization of Iraq's political aspirations, but were also regarded as inimical to her social and economic development.<sup>1</sup> This anti-mandate feeling was best expressed by the term *al-Wad' ash-Shadh* (the perplexing predicament) which had become popular in the press and was applied by the nationalists to account for almost every disappointment in the realization of Iraq's independence. It was indeed an expression which ascribed all political ills to the dual authority of the mandate system. The nationalists argued that there were two Governments in Iraq, one foreign and the other national, and that such a regime was an anomaly, possible in theory but altogether unworkable in practice. The term *al-Wad' ash-Shadh* and all that it entailed has been ably defined in the report of the British Government on the administration of Iraq for 1928 as follows:<sup>2</sup>

The term is used to cover the anomaly that Iraq has national sovereignty and is yet under a mandate, to suggest the dilemma of Ministers, constitutionally responsible to Parliament, but subject to the influence of their British advisers. . . . Iraqi Ministers and administrators profess to find 'perplexing predicament' in every department of the administration of the country. The Iraq Government controls and administers the railways and the Basra port, but does not own them; can declare martial law, but, under the Military Agreement, cannot administer it; and has an army but cannot move it except with the concurrence of the British High Commissioner. Foreign Governments (which are members of the League of Nations) can discriminate in tariff and other matters against Iraqi subjects, but the Iraqi Government has no power to retaliate; foreign subjects have special judicial privileges in Iraq while Iraqi subjects have no reciprocal advantages abroad. . . . It is all the anomalies and perplexities of this kind that arise continually out of Iraq's present treaty relations with Great Britain, which create in the imagination of the more fervid patriots the irritating situation which has earned the name of *al-Wad' ash-Shadh*.

In September 1929 Great Britain finally decided to put an end to the discredited mandate regime. The coming into power of the Labour Government (5 June 1929) had probably influenced this decision. This change of Government was followed by a similar one in Iraq, which was not Labour in the English sense, but a liberal nationalist

<sup>1</sup> See Fahmi al-Mudarris, *Maqalat* (Baghdad, 1931), i. 8, 23–24, 112–18, 136–9.

<sup>2</sup> G. B., Colonial Office, *Report by H.B.M.'s Government to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Iraq, 1928* (London, H.M.S.O., 1929), pp. 26–27.

Government, which was considered capable of pressing for the attainment of Iraq's national aspirations. For it was thought by many liberals, including King Faysal, that a Labour Government in England would pursue a policy favourable to nationalist aspirations. On 14 September 1929 Sir Gilbert Clayton, the British High Commissioner in Baghdad, was authorized to communicate to the Iraqi Government the intention of his Government to terminate the mandate, and to state that Britain<sup>1</sup>

. . . would support the admission of Iraq into the League of Nations in 1932 and would open negotiations with the Iraqi Government, with a view to concluding a treaty defining their relations with Iraq in a liberal spirit on the basis of the proposals for an Anglo-Egyptian settlement.

Neither the Iraqi Prime Minister, Sir Abd al-Muhsin as-Sa'dun, nor the British High Commissioner, Sir Gilbert Clayton, was destined to see the fruits of his endeavours—the first committed suicide on 13 November 1929, as the result of extreme nationalist pressure and a feeling that the Iraqis were ungrateful for his sincere efforts on their behalf, and the latter died after a short illness on 11 September 1929.<sup>2</sup> The two statesmen who laid down the provisions of the new treaty between Britain and Iraq were General Nuri and Sir Francis Humphrys. Nuri accepted the invitation of King Faysal to form a new Government on 25 March 1930, and his chief concern after the formation of his Cabinet was to negotiate a new treaty with Britain which was to regulate the relations between the two countries after Iraq's admission to the League of Nations. Formal negotiations began on 1 April 1930, though the matter had been under discussion before Sir Abd al-Muhsin's death. The treaty was finally signed on 30 June 1930. It provided for the establishment, after the termination of the mandate, of a 'close alliance' between Great Britain and Iraq, and that 'there shall be full and frank consultation between them in all matters of foreign policy which may affect their common interest'. The Iraqi Government undertook responsibility for the maintenance of internal order and for the defence of the country from foreign aggression, except in cases provided by the treaty. Any dispute between Iraq and a third State, involving the risk of war was to be

<sup>1</sup> G. B., Colonial Office, *Policy in Iraq: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies*. Cmd. 3440 (London, H.M.S.O., 1929).

<sup>2</sup> See Abd al-Muhsin's letter to his son, stating his reasons for committing suicide, *Baghdad Times*, 14 Nov. 1929. See also G. B., Colonial Office, *Report . . . on the Administration of Iraq, 1929* (London, H.M.S.O., 1930), pp. 16, 19.



discussed by Iraq and Britain together with a view to its settlement in accordance with the Covenant of the League of Nations and other international procedures applicable to the case. In case of war in spite of these efforts, each party would come to the aid of the other in the capacity of an ally. In the event of an imminent menace of war, the two parties would concert as to the necessary measures of defence. Iraq recognized that the maintenance and protection of essential communications for Great Britain was in the common interest of both parties. Sites were therefore granted for air bases which were selected by Britain near Basra and to the west of the Euphrates, as well as localities for the maintenance of troops 'on the understanding that the presence of those forces shall not constitute in any manner an occupation, and will in no way prejudice the sovereign rights of Iraq'.<sup>1</sup> The treaty was to come into force after Iraq had been admitted to membership of the League of Nations and was to remain in force for twenty-five years.<sup>2</sup>

The treaty was severely criticized by the opposition parties in Iraq and by the imperialists in Britain. The opposition press in Iraq condemned the treaty as inconsistent with the sovereignty of Iraq, and declared that the independence promised in the treaty was illusory. The more specific points of their attack related to the aid which Iraq was required to give in case Britain was engaged in war and the grant of air bases on Iraqi territory, which were denounced as incompatible with the independence of Iraq. Some of the critics went so far as to argue that Iraq would virtually become a British protectorate after the termination of the League mandate.<sup>3</sup> While he had very shrewdly made use of the opposition to obtain better terms during the negotiation of the treaty, Faysal showed some dissatisfaction with the extremists and regarded them as obstructing Iraq's advance to the position of an independent State.<sup>4</sup> Finally, it was argued in some political circles of Baghdad that the treaty was concluded when Iraq was still under the British mandate. But it is also true that Iraq was emancipated from the mandate by virtue of the treaty itself.

<sup>1</sup> The two sites selected were at Habbaniya and Shu'ayba.

<sup>2</sup> The annexure to the treaty dealt with more specific points such as the movement of British forces in Iraq and the equipment of armaments for the Government of Iraq.

<sup>3</sup> See Fahmi al-Mudarris, *Maqalat*, ii. 4 ff.; and Amin Rihani, *Qalb al-Iraq* (Beirut, 1935), pp. 215-18.

<sup>4</sup> See Faysal's speech on 2 Oct. 1931, *al-Alam al-Arabi* (Baghdad), 30 Oct. 1931.

Meanwhile the Iraqi Parliament was dissolved in July with a view 'to affording the nation an opportunity of expressing an opinion' on the treaty. The opposition parties, led by Yasin al-Hashimi and Ja'far Abu 't-Timman, made an effort to organize a national boycott, since they thought they could not have a majority in Parliament. The elections, however, were completed in October and the boycott campaign had appreciable results only in Samarra'. The election returns showed a victory for the Government candidates; only six deputies were returned who were not self-declared supporters of the Government. The treaty was approved on 16 November 1931, after a debate which lasted over four hours in the Chamber of Deputies. The opposition deputies spoke at length and denounced the treaty as an instrument for the benefit of British imperial interests and maintained that it would entail great sacrifices. Its ratification, they declared, would be an eternal disgrace. The deputies who argued in favour of the treaty, however, emphasized its tangible advantages, such as the emancipation of Iraq from the mandate, and the recognition of Iraq's independence and membership of the League of Nations.<sup>1</sup> Approval of the treaty was finally carried by a majority of 69 out of 82 present in the Chamber of Deputies, and 11 out of 16 present in the Senate. This was regarded as a great victory for the policy of the Government.

In Great Britain the treaty was received with a certain misgiving and suspicion. On 31 January 1930, when negotiations with Iraq were still going on, Sir Samuel Hoare, former Secretary of State for Air and a member of the Opposition, warned the British Government that British imperial air communications across Iraq might become insecure. He also raised certain inquiries with regard to the future position of minorities after Iraq attained her independence. Outside Parliament the treaty was attacked by the imperialists on the grounds that Britain had surrendered an important area admirable for air training,<sup>2</sup> that the treaty would involve Britain in war or complications arising from Iraq's relations with her neighbours, and that important racial and religious minorities would be left at the mercy of the Arab majority.<sup>3</sup> In other quarters in Britain the criticism was

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 3rd Sess., 1931, pp. 57-92.

<sup>2</sup> Winston Churchill's reference to Baghdad in 1920 as the 'Clapham Junction of the air' was reiterated.

<sup>3</sup> See 'Ghafir', 'Great Britain and Iraq', *Contemporary Review*, June 1931, pp. 742-9; and 'Fusilier', 'The Independence of Iraq', *Fortnightly Review*, Sept. 1932, pp. 315-25.

made that the withdrawal of the British forces was not to take place immediately after the treaty would come into force.<sup>1</sup>

In France the Paris press criticized the treaty because the termination of the British mandate would encourage Syria and Lebanon—which were manifestly more politically mature than Iraq—to press for a similar procedure. One representative French criticism may be quoted as follows:<sup>2</sup>

It does not seem excessive to conclude that the termination of the mandate in Iraq will in fact have the result of removing a far-reaching international control, the forms of which are fixed by the terms of the mandate and by the working of the institutions at Geneva, and putting in its place a special British control; and that the forms in which this British control will be applied will depend solely upon the choice of the two parties directly concerned. Iraq will cease to be under the aegis of the League of Nations and will become in reality a member of the British Commonwealth. . . . No doubt the League of Nations will desire to be precisely informed as to which of [the] responsibilities [which are to be transferred to Iraq from the mandatory Power] survive and as to the measure in which they are to survive. What is to become of the liberty of conscience, the liberty of worship, the equality of races, creeds and languages, the right of the several communities to preserve their own schools—things which are all inscribed in the organic statute which the Iraqi public authorities will henceforward have full discretion to modify? What is to become of foreign privileges of a juridical order, of the economic equality [in Iraq] between the States Members of the League of Nations, and of the protection of missionaries? What is to become, in general, of that protection of minorities upon which the attention of the Commission of Inquiry and of the Council at Geneva was concentrated with special intensity at the time of the delimitation of the Turco-Iraqi frontier? It was this consideration that dictated both of the conditions upon which the assignment of the Mosul Vilayet to Iraq was made to depend.

At its meeting on 30 October 1931 the treaty was discussed by the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations and it was pointed out that while Article I was vague and might allow one of the parties to interfere in the other's policy, this possibility was mutual, so that this Article could not be regarded as restricting Iraq's independence. 'But', said the Chairman of the Commission, 'it was necessary to bear in mind the respective importance of the two contracting parties, one of whom possessed means of intervention and

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs 1930* (London, Oxford University Press for R.I.I.A., 1931), pp. 325–6.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Temps*, 1 Aug. 1930. Quoted *ibid.*, p. 327.

control which the other did not.'<sup>1</sup> William Rappard said that Article V seemed to him more serious than Article I since it 'gave one of the contracting parties a hold over the other'. Leopoldo Palacios feared that the treaty might transform Iraq, after the termination of the mandate, into 'an ordinary protectorate'.<sup>2</sup> The final opinion of the Mandates Commission, however, as formulated in its report to the Council of the League of Nations, was as follows:<sup>3</sup>

After having carefully considered the text of these undertakings [the treaty and its annexure] and having heard the explanations and information on the subject from the accredited representative, the Commission came to the conclusion that, although certain of the provisions of the Treaty of Alliance of 30 June 1930, were somewhat unusual in treaties of this kind, the obligations entered into by Iraq towards Great Britain did not explicitly infringe the independence of the new State.

On 4 November 1929 the British Foreign Office sent a note to the League of Nations announcing the decision of His Majesty's Government to recommend Iraq for admission to membership in the League of Nations in 1932.

At its session in November 1929 the Permanent Mandates Commission began at once to consider the British proposal concerning Iraq's admission to the League. It held several meetings in order to examine both the general principles governing the termination of a mandate and the political maturity achieved by Iraq. The British Government prepared a *Special Report on the Progress of Iraq*,<sup>4</sup> 1920–31, which was sent to the League in May 1931 and the Mandates Commission began to examine it in June. Sir Francis Humphrys, then British High Commissioner for Iraq, attended the meetings of the Mandates Commission and made a long and instructive statement in support of Iraq's ability to 'stand alone'. He concluded his statement by saying that Iraq was 'not free from imperfections', but if given independence and the opportunity for progress by admission to the League, she would fulfil the spirit and the 'high ideals with which the founders of the League were inspired'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> League of Nations, *Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission*, 21st Sess., 1931, pp. 75–76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>4</sup> G. B., Colonial Office, Iraq: *Special Report by H.B.M.'s Government . . . to the Council of the League of Nations on the progress of Iraq during the period 1920–31* (London, H.M.S.O., 1931).

<sup>5</sup> League of Nations, *Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission*, 20th Sess., 1931, p. 124.



Following this statement, the Mandates Commission began to question Humphrys in order to gain a more realistic picture of the political maturity of Iraq. Pierre Orts inquired about the future of minorities, and whether Iraq possessed that spirit of tolerance which was necessary for their existence. Humphrys replied in the affirmative and said that the best answer to Orts's observation could be found in the *Special Report*.<sup>1</sup> Then Humphrys added:

His Majesty's Government fully realised its responsibility in recommending that Iraq would be admitted to the League, which was, in its view, the only legal way of terminating the mandate. Should Iraq prove herself unworthy of the confidence which had been placed in her, the moral responsibility must rest with His Majesty's Government, which would not attempt to transfer it to the Mandates Commission.<sup>2</sup>

The Mandates Commission, in the meantime, discussed the general conditions attained by Iraq which justified the claim that the country had reached the stage of development so as to be able to 'stand alone'. The investigations of the Mandates Commission were communicated to the Council of the League, and the Council adopted the following resolution at its meeting on 28 January 1932:<sup>3</sup>

The Council,

Having to consider the special case of the termination of the Mandate for Iraq;

(1) Notes the opinion formulated, at its request, by the Permanent Mandates Commission on the proposal of the British Government;

(2) Considers that the information available is sufficient to show that Iraq satisfies, generally speaking, the *de facto* conditions enumerated in the Annex to the Council resolution of 4 September 1931;

(3) Declares itself prepared, in principle, to pronounce the termination of the Mandatory regime in Iraq, when that State shall have entered into undertakings before the Council in conformity with the suggestions contained in the report of the Permanent Mandates Commission, it being understood that the right to apply to the Permanent Court of International Justice may only be exercised by Members of the League represented on the Council;

(4) Accordingly requests its rapporteurs for minorities questions, questions of international law and mandates, and the representative of the United Kingdom on the Council, to prepare, in consultation with the representative of the Iraqi Government, and, if necessary, with a representative of the Permanent Mandates Commission, a draft Declaration covering

<sup>1</sup> League of Nations, *Minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission*, 20th Sess., 1931, pp. 115-16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup> League of Nations, *Official Journal*, March 1932, p. 474.

the various guarantees recommended in the report of the Permanent Mandates Commission, and to submit that draft to the Council at its next session;

(5) Decides that, should the Council, after examining the undertakings which would be entered into by the Iraq Government, pronounce the termination of the mandatory regime over that territory, such decision shall become effective only as from the date on which Iraq has been admitted to the League of Nations.

On 12 July 1932 General Nuri as-Sa'id, Prime Minister of Iraq, made a formal request that Iraq be admitted as a member of the League of Nations, and asked that his request be placed on the agenda of the League Assembly. In the Thirteenth Assembly the application of Iraq was first considered by a committee, and then approved by a unanimous vote of the Assembly on 3 October 1932. Iraq became the fifty-seventh member of the League of Nations and the third Middle East member.

#### GREAT BRITAIN'S RELATIONS WITH INDEPENDENT IRAQ

Great Britain's position in Iraq, which has been discussed in various sections of this work, can be rapidly summed up. Before the termination of the mandate, Britain's chief representative, the High Commissioner, was regarded, from the international viewpoint, as the supreme authority in Iraq. From the constitutional point of view, however, the King of Iraq, as the titular head of the national administration, was regarded as fully responsible. The High Commissioner, while 'he retained his responsibility to His Majesty's Government, and through them to the League of Nations, . . . exercised it in the form of advice' rendered 'to the King of Iraq, by which the latter undertook to be guided'. The position of the High Commissioner was accordingly that of 'an adviser and not of a controlling authority'.<sup>1</sup> The terms 'advice' and 'authority' may at times have proved confusing. It is probably more consistent with the facts to argue that every new High Commissioner who went to Baghdad gradually became aware of the fact that he was sent merely to advise rather than to control.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Special Report . . . on the Progress of Iraq . . . 1920-31*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Four High Commissioners served in Iraq during the period from the establishment of the national administration in 1921 to the termination of the Mandate in 1932: Sir Percy Cox, 1920-3; Sir Henry Dobbs, 1923-8; Sir Gilbert Clayton (died on 11 September 1929); Sir Francis Humphrys, 1929-32 (after 1932 he became Great Britain's first Ambassador to Iraq).

Apart from the fact that the High Commissioner was assisted by his own staff, especially the Oriental Secretary,<sup>1</sup> he was also helped by British administrative officials in the service of the Iraqi Government, who were 'called upon to keep the High Commissioner fully informed at all stages'. These officials, whose functions were advisory rather than executive, were paid by the Iraqi Government and made responsible to it. The advice they gave to Iraq continued throughout the period of tutelage, but gradually receded into the background by the time Iraq was approaching full self-government. 'By that time', stated the British *Special Report*, 'the great majority of the executive posts in the Administration were occupied by Iraqi officials, and for the period 1925-9 Iraqi effort may well claim a substantial share of the credit for the progress achieved.'

The advice of the British officials was probably not always fully appreciated by the Iraqi officials, and at times it was resented merely because it came from a foreign source. The British officials, aware of this, tried not to arouse suspicion and were instructed to refrain from exercising any direct control over the administration. As stated in the *Special Report*:<sup>2</sup>

They have endeavoured, in conformity with the policy of His Majesty's Government, to limit their advice to that which they would in any case have given if they had been the servants of a fully self-governing State. The result has been that their Iraqi colleagues have assumed to an increasing extent the real responsibility which must inevitably fall upon them when Iraq is admitted to membership of the League. Cases may have occurred where individuals have proved themselves unworthy of their responsibility: the highest ideals may not always have been reached; full advantage may not always have been taken of the disinterested advice which the British officials are no less ready to render than they were before; but that the general stability of the administration has been maintained is beyond question, and if the blame for individual failures is to be laid to the door of the Iraqi nation, it is only right that they should be given their fair share of the credit for the general measure of success achieved.

After Iraq attained independence, Britain's position in Iraq was reduced merely to one of 'privilege' among other foreign countries in treaty relations with the new State. The privileges were partly defined in the Treaty of 30 June 1930, and were partly the legacy of Britain's stewardship and long connexions with Iraq. The

<sup>1</sup> Two Oriental Secretaries served during the mandate period: Gertrude Bell, 1919-26 (died on 12 July 1926); Captain V. Holt, 1926-44.

<sup>2</sup> *Special Report . . . on the Progress of Iraq . . . 1920-31*, pp. 29-30.

non-judicial privileges, important though they have been, are hard to define with any precision and often led to confusion between the official policy of the British Foreign Office and the personal desires and activities of Britishers in the employment of the Iraqi Government.

Apart from the mutual obligations undertaken by Britain and Iraq as defined in the Treaty of Alliance, Britain was granted in addition to the two air bases, 'the use of railways, rivers, ports, aerodromes and means of communication', for the defence of imperial communications in Iraq.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, all Iraq's requirements for war material and equipment were to be purchased from Great Britain, unless the latter was unable to supply them. 'In view of the desirability of identity in training and methods between the Iraqi and British armies, His Majesty the King of Iraq undertakes that, should he deem it necessary to have recourse to foreign military instructors, those shall be chosen from among British subjects.' Such arms and equipment 'shall not differ in type from those of the forces of His Britannic Majesty'. Further, military training of Iraqi personnel 'that may be sent abroad' should be undertaken in Great Britain.

In a separate note between the British and Iraqi Governments, at the time when the Treaty of 1930 was concluded, it was agreed that Britain would send an advisory Military Mission to Iraq for the purpose of improving 'the efficiency' of the Iraqi 'land and air forces'. It was also agreed that the Iraqi Government 'will normally engage British subjects when in need of the services of foreign officials', but that when 'suitable British subjects are not available', the Iraqi Government will have freedom to engage non-British subjects. Finally, the British Representative in Iraq, as the first Ambassador in the country, enjoyed precedence over the representatives of other countries.

One important problem which gave rise to controversy was whether British military help would be extended to Iraq in case of civil war or of armed conflict between the Government and one of the non-Arab minorities. The question was raised both in Iraq and in the British Parliament. Humphrys, at the time when the Treaty of 1930 was discussed, was of the opinion that Britain would help Iraq in times of internal disorder.<sup>2</sup> In England this question was raised both by Sir

<sup>1</sup> Arts. 4 and 5 of the treaty.

<sup>2</sup> See a statement made by Humphrys to Amin Rihani in *Qalb al-Iraq* (Beirut, 1935), pp. 211-12.



Samuel Hoare in Parliament on 23 July 1931,<sup>1</sup> and by Sir Henry Dobbs, a former British High Commissioner for Iraq, in a letter dated 26 September and published in *The Times* on 29 September 1932. The British Government declared that its forces in Iraq were not there 'for the purpose of putting down internal disturbances';<sup>2</sup> and after a long debate the Prime Minister made a statement on 16 November 1932, in answer to a question raised in the House of Commons, in which he said:<sup>3</sup>

British forces are maintained in Iraq for no other purpose than those set out in Article 5 of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance of 30 June 1930, namely, to assist in the protection of British communications and to facilitate the discharge of obligations undertaken by this country under Article 4 of that Treaty. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have no obligations in regard to the maintenance of internal order in Iraq, the responsibility for which rests solely upon the Iraqi Government, as is expressly recognized in Article 5 of the Treaty. Were the Iraqi Government to ask at any time for assistance not contemplated by the Treaty of Alliance, the situation would have to be considered in the light of the various factors existing at the time.

In the light of subsequent events, three instances may be cited to test the validity of the British declaration with regard to non-intervention in domestic disorder. The first was the Assyrian uprising in 1933; the second, which was probably a more serious challenge to the central authority, was the Middle Euphrates uprising of 1935; and the third was the military coup d'état of 1936. In regard to the second, in an interview with the present writer, Lord Inverchapel (formerly Sir Archibald Clark Kerr, British Ambassador for Iraq) stated that the Iraqi Government asked in 1935 for the help of the British Royal Air Force to support the Iraqi army in putting down the tribal uprisings. He had declined to grant such help on the grounds that the Treaty of 1930 promised help only in case of foreign aggression. In regard to the third, in 1936, it will be recalled, Kerr, though he sympathized with the Yasin Government, assumed a neutral attitude in the dispute between the lawful Government and the rebellious army led by Bakr Sidqi. In 1941 Britain's neutral attitude towards domestic troubles was no longer maintained. The circumstances and the events of the intervention have been fully discussed elsewhere, but it is significant to note that in this instance, in contrast to the

<sup>1</sup> H.C. Deb., vol. 255, cols. 1784 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., col. 1827.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. 270, col. 1110.

earlier three, the attitude of the Iraqi Government had become hostile towards Great Britain, especially with regard to the fulfilment of Iraq's treaty obligations.

By relinquishing her mandate over Iraq Great Britain achieved three ends. First, she safeguarded her fundamental imperial interests in Iraq by concluding a Treaty of Alliance on the basis of equality and mutual interests without undertaking any obligations towards an international organization as provided under the League mandates. Secondly, she put an end to Iraq's complaint that she was interfering in the domestic affairs of the country. Britain, perhaps, sought to win the goodwill of the Iraqis, and by assisting Iraq to win her independence in 1932 she was fully entitled to such goodwill. Her help was indeed fully appreciated by Faysal and the moderate nationalists, though the pan-Arabists continued to be critical of British policy towards the Arabs.

Finally, it was made evident that continued control or guidance of a people, from the viewpoint of the international administration of dependencies, may not be the best way for helping that people to learn how to govern themselves. Having safeguarded her fundamental interests, Britain, it seems, was quite satisfied to leave Iraq to learn the art of self-government from her own mistakes. Captain V. Holt, the Oriental Secretary of the British Embassy in Baghdad (1926-44), has perhaps expressed the real position of the British Government in a statement made to a correspondent of *Asia* in 1938.<sup>1</sup> The present writer, impressed by the statement, wrote to Holt to ascertain its validity. Holt reaffirmed his opinion in a letter to the writer (7 March 1947), but rephrased it as follows:

The steady progress which Iraq has made since the termination of the Mandate in 1932 has strengthened me in my belief that the ability of any people to govern themselves does not, as many seem to think, develop in ratio to the length of the period during which they are under tutelage. On the contrary, prolonged tutelage weakens, and ultimately destroys, the qualities on which the capacity for self-government depends. The one way for any people to learn how to govern themselves is by the assumption of real responsibility for the management of their own affairs.

#### RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAQ AND SAUDI ARABIA

Relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia were by no means friendly from the time when the Iraqi Government was established,

<sup>1</sup> Albert Viton, 'Iraq: Study in Imperialism', *Asia*, Jan. 1938, p. 60.

owing both to the periodic trans-frontier raids and to the rivalry between the Hashimi and Saudi dynasties.

The need for controlling the nomadic tribes which inhabit the vast open desert to the south of Iraq and used to wander between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, was, however, urgent. In 1922 the Treaty of Muhammara was signed by representatives of Britain, the Najdi and Iraqi Governments. It provided for determining the nationality of the principal nomadic tribes of the desert lying on the borders of the two countries, guaranteed the safety of pilgrims, and established free commercial intercourse between the subjects of both Governments. In December of the same year a protocol to this treaty defining the frontier between Iraq and Najd was drawn up and signed by Iraqi and Najdi representatives at 'Uqair (on the Persian Gulf).

The next step was to put a stop to the tribal raids from both sides which caused trouble to both Governments. Various attempts were made to stop them, and in 1925 the Bahra Agreement was signed, which settled a number of outstanding issues concerning the treatment of migratory tribes crossing from the territory of one State into the other, and provided for the periodic meeting of a special joint tribunal to fix responsibility for raids and to assess damages. While this resulted in an initial measure of success in stopping tribal raids, a sudden occurrence of a series of savage raids into Iraq from Najd followed. King Abd al-'Aziz Ibn Sa'ud objected to the establishment by the Iraqi Government of certain police posts in the southern desert area, which were construed to have been directed against Najdi interests. Negotiations followed between the Iraqi and Najdi representatives, but no agreement was reached.

In 1930 the chief tribal opponent of King Ibn Sa'ud, Faysal ad-Dawish, was captured by the Iraqi police and handed over to Najd on an assurance that he was to be given humane treatment. The elimination of Faysal ad-Dawish, who had frequently trespassed over the Iraqi frontier, removed a great deal of misunderstanding which had prevented a settlement of tribal raids between Iraq and Najd. Great Britain, in treaty relations with both these Arab States, offered her good offices for a final settlement. An arrangement for the meeting of the two Arab kings was made and took place on 22-24 February 1930 on board a British warship, the *Lupin*, in the Persian Gulf, in the presence of the British High Commissioner for Iraq. This meeting put an end to the hard feeling between the two families. The frontier police posts and certain other issues were settled by a friendly ex-

change of courtesies.<sup>1</sup> An exchange of notes followed and the signing of a *bon voisinage* agreement which settled all issues pending between the two countries.

From the time when Faysal and Ibn Sa'ud met in 1930 friendly relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia were established. Ibn Sa'ud, on his side, having consolidated his position in Arabia after his war with Yaman in 1934, embarked on a prototype 'good-neighbour' policy with his neighbours. In 1935 friendly visits were exchanged between Baghdad and Riyadh for effecting a more intimate relation. This rapprochement was encouraged in certain Iraqi nationalist circles.<sup>2</sup> On 20 January 1936 Shaykh Yusuf Yasin, Ibn Sa'ud's secretary, arrived in Baghdad to negotiate an Iraqi-Sa'udi treaty. The Treaty of Arab Brotherhood and Alliance between Iraq and Saudi Arabia was officially signed in Baghdad on 2 April 1936.

The treaty provided for the peaceful settlement of disputes between the two countries (Art. 2); neither one of them was to enter into an agreement with a third party 'over any matter whatever of a nature prejudicial to the interests of the other . . . or of a nature calculated to expose to danger or harm the safety or interests of his country' (Art. 1); and both countries, in case of a dispute between either one of them and a third party, 'shall jointly endeavour to settle such disputes by peaceful means' (Art. 3). In case either country were to fall a victim to aggression, the two parties 'shall consult together regarding the measures which shall be taken with the object of concerting their efforts in a useful manner to repel the said aggression' (Art. 4). In case of domestic disorder, each country was to help the other by taking certain measures against the insurgents (Art. 5). The treaty stressed the necessity of co-operating in cultural, educational, and military matters 'with a view to unifying the Islamic and Arab cultures and the military systems of their two countries by means of the exchange of educational and military missions' (Art. 7). In the event of one of the two not being represented in a foreign country, the other party might, if requested, 'undertake the representation of the interests of the other' party where she might have no diplomatic or consular representative (Art. 8). The treaty did not apply, and was even to be renounced, if either party should commit an act of aggression against a third party (Art. 10). Iraq's obligations under the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Kellogg-Briand Pact,

<sup>1</sup> Amin Rihani, *Faysal al-Awwal* (Beirut, 1934), pp. 168-70.

<sup>2</sup> See a leading article in *al-Islah*, 22 June 1935.



and the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, were reserved (Art. 9). Certain other technical matters were also dealt with either in the treaty or in a subsidiary protocol.

The Yaman was invited to adhere to the treaty, and though the Imam Yahya, King of Yaman, hesitated at first, he finally signed it on 29 April 1937.

One of the significant features of the treaty was its emphasis on religion and Arab kinship. Both in the Preamble and Article 6 the Arabic and religious ties were stressed. The religious emphasis was to satisfy the Wahhabi puritan State, and the national character to fit in with the pattern of the Iraqi national State. These two ties, however, were regarded as complementary rather than as contradictory features of the two Arab States.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE BOUNDARY DISPUTE BETWEEN IRAQ AND PERSIA

The boundary dispute between Iraq and Persia over the Shatt al-ʿArab may be regarded as a legacy of the Ottoman Empire which Iraq, as a successor State, had inherited. From the time when Sultan Selim I (1516–20) had extended Ottoman sovereignty to the East, Iraq became the field of an intermittent dispute between Ottoman sultans and Persian shahs. The basis for a settlement between the two Islamic States had been finally laid down in the Treaty of Erzerum (31 May 1847). The demarcation of the boundaries, however, which was to have taken place immediately afterwards, was three times delayed (although Turkey and Persia remained at peace with each other) by wars in Europe, mainly owing to the conflicting interests of Great Britain and Russia.

The frontier between Persia and the Ottoman Empire, on the Ottoman side, was divided after the First World War between Iraq and Turkey, as successor States. The northern section, between Turkey and Persia, was the subject of controversy which was settled by an agreement on 23 January 1932.<sup>2</sup> The southern section, between Iraq and Persia, had given rise to controversies which culminated in an appeal by the Iraqi Government to the Council of the League of Nations in 1934. In a memorandum which the Iraqi Government had submitted to the League Council, a number of incidents were adduced

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Razzuq Ghannam's comments in *al-Iraq*, 8 Apr. 1936.

<sup>2</sup> The Turco-Persian settlement of 1932 was based on an exchange of territories in which Persia ceded to Turkey, in return for an equivalent Turkish territory, the Little Ararat, a mountain which had served as an asylum in Persia for Kurdish nationalists who opposed Turkish policy.

which were regarded as legal irregularities and prompted the Iraqi Government, after failure to achieve redress by direct negotiations, to appeal to the League of Nations.<sup>1</sup> The Iraqi appeal, made in the form of a request under Article 11 (para. 2)<sup>2</sup> of the League Covenant, was presented in a note to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations on 29 November 1934.<sup>3</sup> The Government of Persia gave its consent to the submission of the dispute on 23 December 1934.

While Persia denied the legal validity of the frontier from Qurnah to the Shatt al-ʿArab, her specific claim was to modify the frontier to coincide with the thalweg line of the Shatt al-ʿArab. The whole of the waters of the Shatt al-ʿArab, from shore to shore, were under the control of Iraq, but her exclusive sovereignty was disputed by the Government of Persia. The Iraqi Government, as part of its juridical inheritance of the Ottoman Empire, based its claim on a number of international agreements which the Ottoman Empire had concluded. The first of these documents was the Treaty of Erzerum, concluded between Persia and the Ottoman Empire on 31 May 1847, and ratified on 21 March 1848. General Nuri, then Foreign Minister, declared at the Council of the League of Nations on 14 January 1935 that Articles 2 and 3 of the Erzerum Treaty established Ottoman (and consequently Iraqi) sovereignty over the whole of the Shatt al-ʿArab. The third paragraph of Article 2 implicitly stipulated the left bank of Shatt al-ʿArab, and not the thalweg, as the southern frontier of Persia. The text of Article 2 follows:

The Ottoman Government formally recognizes the unrestricted sovereignty of the Persian Government over the city of Muhammara, the island of Khizr, the anchorage, and the land on the eastern bank—that is to say, the left bank—of the Shatt al-ʿArab, which are in the possession of tribes recognized as belonging to Persia. Further, Persian vessels shall have the right to navigate freely without let or hindrance on the Shatt al-ʿArab from the south of the same to the point of contact of the frontiers of the two Parties.

In stating Iraq's case before the League Council on 14 January 1935,

<sup>1</sup> For text of the memorandum, see League of Nations, *Official Journal*, Feb. 1935, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 11, para. 2, states: 'It is also declared to be the friendly right of each member of the League to bring to the attention of the Assembly or the Council any circumstance whatever affecting international relations which threatens to disturb international peace or the good understanding between nations upon which peace depends.'

<sup>3</sup> For text of the letter, see League of Nations, *Official Journal*, Feb. 1935, pp. 196–7.

General Nuri asserted that both equity and treaty rights supported the Iraqi Government's point of view. He said:<sup>1</sup>

On the general question of equity, the Iraqi Government feels that it is Iraq and not Persia that has grounds for complaint. Persia has a coast-line of almost two thousand kilometres, with many ports and anchorages. In the Khor Musa, only fifty kilometres away to the east of the Shatt al-Arab, Persia possesses a deep-water harbour penetrating far into Persian territory, where she has already constructed the terminus of the Trans-Persian Railway. Iraq is essentially the land of the two rivers, Euphrates and Tigris. The Shatt al-Arab, formed by their junction, constitutes Iraq's only access to the sea; it requires constant attention if it is to be kept fit for navigation by modern shipping, and Basrah, 100 kilometres from the mouth, is Iraq's only port. It is highly undesirable, from Iraq's point of view, that another Power should command this channel from one bank. Iraq is not asking that the frontier should be altered, but I make these remarks to show that this is not because the existing line is unduly to its advantage.

Nuri's claim was not only based on the Erzerum Treaty of 1847, but also on the Tehran Protocol of 21 December 1911, which provided the formation of a four-Power joint commission to draw up the frontiers. The Tehran Protocol was supplemented by the Constantinople Protocol of 4 November (Western calendar 17th) 1913, providing for further specification of the delimitation. The work was to be completed by the four-Power commission of 1914, which was to execute the terms of the Constantinople Protocol of 1913, which was concluded between Persia, the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, and Russia.

This document [stated Nuri]<sup>2</sup> defines the boundary in some detail, mainly by reference to geographical features, and provides for a Delimitation Commission consisting of representatives of each of the signatory Powers with power to the two mediating Commissioners to decide finally on disputed questions. . . . The Delimitation Commission was duly constituted, as provided by the Protocol of Constantinople, and proceeded in due course to the Persian Gulf. For nine months—from January to October 1914—the Commission proceeded with the most painstaking care to delimit and mark the frontier on the spot. The records of the Commission show the thoroughness and impartiality with which they considered every question raised, and, incidentally, they show the constant appeals that were made, particularly by the Persian delegate, to the Treaty of Erzerum as the basis of the boundary. The Commission completed the whole of its work, except for one small sector north of Mount Dalampar and therefore

<sup>1</sup> League of Nations, *Official Journal*, Feb. 1935, pp. 113–14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115–16.

outside the area with which we are concerned. I desire to emphasize that the task of the Commission was an extremely difficult and arduous one, performed with the greatest care and ability, and that as a result of its labours the whole of the boundary between Persia and Iraq was marked out by frontier-posts and precise indications on large-scale maps. It is this clear and well-considered boundary which my Government wishes to see respected as the frontier between the two countries.

In his memorandum of 8 January 1935 the Persian Foreign Minister, Mirza Sayyid Baqir Khan Kazimi, stated the Persian case as follows:<sup>1</sup>

According to the Government of Iraq, the boundary was fixed by the Treaty of Erzerum of 1847 and by the Protocol signed at Constantinople on 4 November 1913. . . . The Persian Government . . . is of the opinion that the Treaty of Erzerum, the Protocol of Constantinople of 1913, and consequently the delimitation effected by the Delimitation Commission of 1914, have no force, either in law or in equity, to determine the frontier. . . . Negotiations, which were conducted under the pressing mediation of the two Great Powers [Great Britain and Russia], had been lengthy and difficult, lasting for years. The two Contracting Parties were thus obliged to insert a provision to the effect 'that, when the texts of this Treaty have been exchanged, they will accept and sign the same, and that the ratifications thereof shall be exchanged within the space of two months, or earlier' (Article 9).

The Sublime Porte asked for an interpretation, which the Ambassadors gave in an explanatory note (14–26 April 1847) . . . on the understanding, wrote the Ottoman Minister for Foreign Affairs in his reply to the Powers, 'that the Court of Persia will accept the assurances which have been given by the representatives of the two mediating Courts to the effect that it will raise no claim going counter to those assurances, and on the further understanding that, in the event of any such claim being raised, the Treaty will be deemed to be null and void.'

When the Persian representative appeared in Constantinople, the Powers requested him to include the explanatory note in his ratification. To accept that note, which was added to the Convention of nine articles as a supplementary treaty, was to exceed his instructions and his powers. None the less, at the urgent request of the Porte, he took upon himself to give to the explanatory note, in the form of a ratification, an acceptance which required the signature of the Head of the State; though at the same time he carefully made it clear that his powers did not extend so far, and that his declaration was a purely personal one. The treaty, which was to be 'accepted, signed

<sup>1</sup> For text of the memorandum see *ibid.*, pp. 217–22.



and ratified' (Art. 9), was thus ratified without having been accepted. Since the acceptance of the explanatory note was the essential condition of the establishment of the contract, which would otherwise be 'null and void' according to the Ottoman declaration, that instrument, on which the Royal Government [of Iraq] now seeks to base its case, is, as was stated in the Ottoman note, 'null and void'.

The Persian memorandum, in fact, analyses the circumstances and provisions of the 1913 and 1914 agreements only to declare them 'null and void', and to state that they had effected departures from the 'status quo of 1848', which had caused a considerable alteration of the territorial position which, according to the Persian constitution, required the approval of the Persian Parliament. The Constantinople Protocol was from the beginning not approved by Parliament and hence 'the condition essential for its validity . . . is lacking'. Having thus declared both the Erzerum Treaty and the agreements of 1913 and 1914 'null and void', the Persian memorandum summed up the discussion as follows:

Hence it must be concluded that the 1913 Protocol and the 1914 delimitation relied on by the Iraqi Government must be deliberately rejected. They must be rejected, (1) because they take as starting-point a treaty which was itself non-existent at the time when the Tehran Agreement of 1911 referred to it; (2) because, in concluding the 1913 Protocol, which already gravely departs from the provisions and stipulations of the Tehran Agreement of 1911 providing for arbitration in case of disagreement, all the rules of the mediation procedure, the main features of which had just been fixed at The Hague in agreements signed by all the Parties, were openly disregarded; (3) because, on the pretext of a treaty between Persia and the Ottoman Empire, an agreement was in reality concluded between Great Britain and Russia, accompanied on the Shatt-al-Arab by a direct agreement concluded in London between Great Britain and the Sublime Porte and by the improper conclusion of a bilateral understanding in the British capital in the middle of negotiations which were to take place at Constantinople between all the Parties; (4) because, lastly, one of the Parties, the Ottoman Empire, immediately failed to carry out, in a great many respects, the Act of 1913 fixing the frontier—a failure which, even if partial, involved the total lapse of the Act owing to its indivisible character.

On 15 January 1935 the Persian Foreign Minister, Mirza Sayyid Baqir Kazimi, stated his country's case at the Council of the League of Nations, summarizing the foregoing memorandum, but emphasizing the 'substantial differences between the two lines—the Erzerum line of 1848 and the Constantinople line of 1913', as follows:

The Treaty of Erzerum does not say a word about giving to the Porte the whole of the Shatt al-Arab, in full sovereignty, as far as low-water mark on the Persian bank. It does not fix in direct, clear and categorical terms the frontier on the bank beyond the waters of the river; yet this should have been made quite explicit, in absolute and formal terms, if the intention were to depart from the fundamental principle of the equal sovereignty of the two riparians as far as the middle of the river. On the other hand, after having been careful to conclude with the Porte on the same day a Convention which in practice placed the administration of the river under her authority, although she was not a riparian, Great Britain did not hesitate, by a declaration dated 29 July 1913, to remove the frontier expressly to the further bank. This declaration, for which she undertook to secure the acceptance of Persia, which, in this matter, was not a free agent, was simply introduced into the Constantinople Protocol, of which it formed the essential text as regards the southern frontier.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile direct negotiations were resumed and a League rapporteur, Baron Aloisi, tried to reconcile the points of view of the two Governments. At first Aloisi suggested the internationalization of the Shatt al-Arab, which was acceptable neither to Iraq nor to Persia. The resumption of direct negotiations marked a turn for the better. The scene shifted from Geneva to Tehran, and General Nuri continued direct negotiation with the Persian Government. When the negotiations reached a final stage where they had almost broken down, the Shah himself gave further encouragement by declaring to Nuri that he wanted nothing more from Iraq than the thalweg of the Shatt in front of Abadan. This meant that Iraq would retain her sovereignty over the whole of Shatt al-Arab except a few kilometres of the Abadan area, and Nuri accepted this compromise as a basis for further discussion.

It would probably be superfluous to discuss the legal basis of the settlement, since the agreement of the Iraqi Government to surrender part of her sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab was made on political rather than legal grounds.<sup>2</sup> Complications in the international situation greatly affected a speedy settlement with the object of bringing these two Middle East countries, together with Turkey and Afghanistan, to form a Middle Eastern Pact. This was prompted by Mussolini's successful move in 1935 and his occupation of Abyssinia, which

<sup>1</sup> League of Nations, *Official Journal*, Feb. 1935, pp. 118–19. For an account of the Persian point of view, see Rahmatollah Achoube-Amini, *Le Conflit de frontière irako-iranien* (Paris, 1936).

<sup>2</sup> See Fuad K. Mufarrij, *The Iraqi-Persian Frontier Dispute in International Law* (Beirut, 1935).

undermined both the prestige of the League of Nations and the principle of collective security. In the Middle East, as indeed in Western Europe, there was a revival of the old diplomacy of alliances and pacts, which were resorted to as a measure of security against aggression. Turkey, as an important eastern Mediterranean country, was the first to feel the danger of Mussolini's threat in the East, and therefore suggested that Persia and Iraq should speedily settle their differences in order to discuss the larger problem of regional security for the Middle East. President Atatürk cabled a personal friendly message to Iraq and Persia expressing the hope of a satisfactory agreement. Thus, in the words of Dr Arnold J. Toynbee, 'it was not the diplomatic action of the League Council's Italian rapporteur Baron Aloisi in Europe, but the military action of Baron Aloisi's master in Africa, that brought the two Middle Eastern disputants to reason'.<sup>1</sup>

While negotiations were going on between Iraq and Persia, the first Iraqi military coup d'état took place in 1936; though it caused a change in the personnel of the Iraqi negotiator, it did not affect the course of actual negotiations. General Nuri was replaced by Dr Naji al-Asil, the new Iraqi Foreign Minister, who not only carried the negotiations to a final settlement, but also continued discussion of a Four-Power Middle Eastern Pact, known as the Sa'dabad Pact. The new boundary treaty between Iraq and Persia was signed in Tehran on 4 July 1937. The treaty stipulated that both the Constantinople Protocol of 1913 and the *procès verbal* of the Delimitation Commission of 1914 were valid instruments as bases for the delimitation of the frontiers between Iraq and Persia (Art. 1). It also stipulated that the frontiers between Iraq and Persia would run along the Shatt al-Arab on its left bank, except for the section of eight kilometres in front of Abadan where the frontiers would be the thalweg or the mid-channel of the Shatt al-Arab (Art. 2).

#### THE SA'DABAD PACT

The idea of extending a type of Balkan Security Pact to the Middle East regions came from Turkey, prompted by Mussolini's threat to the eastern Mediterranean. Preliminary negotiations for the pact were initiated in Geneva in September 1935, between the Turkish and Persian accredited representatives to the League of Nations, and a draft pact was initialed on 2 October 1935.

It remained for the two most powerful Middle East States, Turkey

<sup>1</sup> *Survey of International Affairs, 1936*, p. 801.

and Persia, to enlist the co-operation of other States in order to complete the structure of a regional security pact comprising the independent Middle Eastern countries. In January 1936 the Afghan Foreign Minister was entertained by Dr Rüstü Aras, the Turkish Foreign Minister, at a banquet in Ankara, and the first public reference to a Middle Eastern Pact was made. From January to July negotiations were conducted between Turkey and Persia on the one hand, and between Persia and Iraq on the other, to settle certain frontier matters before the pact was signed. The Iraqi-Persian dispute, it will be recalled, was withdrawn from the League Council, and a boundary treaty was finally concluded in Tehran on 4 July 1937.

At the time that the Foreign Ministers of Iraq and Persia signed the boundary treaty in Tehran, they were joined by the Foreign Ministers of Turkey and Afghanistan and signed at Sa'dabad a Four-Power Middle Eastern Pact on 8 July 1937. The Sa'dabad Pact provided for consultation among the four Powers in all disputes that might touch their common interests (Art. 3); for regarding their common frontiers as inviolable (Art. 2); and for abstaining from interference in the domestic affairs of each others' country (Arts. 1, 7). Article 4 stipulated that the four Powers should not 'resort, whether singly or jointly with one or more third Powers, to any act of aggression directed against any other of the Contracting Parties'. It was also agreed to bring any violation of Article 4 to the Council of the League of Nations (Art. 5). An act of aggression by one of the contracting parties would entitle the others to denounce the pact in respect of the party in question (Art. 6). The pact was to be in force for five years in the first instance, and it was to remain in force for a second term of the same length in respect of any of the parties that had not given six months' notice of denunciation before the expiry of the first five years (Art. 10). In a separate protocol, which was signed on the same day, the four Powers agreed to set up a Permanent Council, which was to meet at least once a year, and a Secretariat of its own. The Council met only once, when the four Foreign Ministers were still in Tehran, but never again. At that first meeting a resolution was adopted which provided the support of the four Powers for Persia's application (and then that of each other member in alphabetical order) for election to the seat in the Council of the League of Nations which was then held by Turkey, but was due to be vacated by her at the forthcoming meeting in September. It was also decided to hold the next meeting at Kabul, Afghanistan, but this never took place.



The Sa'dabad Pact, like its counterpart the Balkan Pact, hardly meant anything more than a pious declaration of goodwill on the part of its signatories, since it failed to provide any solidarity among its members. Regarded from another angle, it is to be noted that the Power which had expected great returns from her initiation of, and participation in, the pact was under direct threat from another direction. Turkey, whose territory was long coveted by Mussolini, was not afraid of England or Russia; she rather sought to consolidate her position against the Axis Powers. If Turkey were able to influence her partners, the pact would have been an asset both to Britain and Russia rather than a liability. Failure to create solidarity proved that the weakness of the pact came from within rather than from foreign opposition.

#### IRAQ AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

From the time that the Treaty of 1930 came into force in 1932, the foreign policy of Iraq seems to have been fairly consistent with British foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> There were, it is true, forces within Iraq which urged an independent foreign policy dictated by Iraq's own interests. These forces, it will be recalled, had become increasingly influential in the orientation of Iraq's foreign policy when the Second World War broke out in 1939. A full discussion of the consequences, which culminated in the thirty-days' war between Britain and Iraq, was given in Chapter IX.

After the collapse of the Rashid Ali regime, the coming into power of the moderate nationalists gradually led to the reorientation of Iraq's foreign policy, in line with British foreign policy. The Midfa'i Cabinet, which was formed in June 1941 after Rashid Ali's flight, tried at first to restore order and then broke off diplomatic relations with the Axis Powers. On 9 October 1941 General Nuri as-Sa'id, the leading protagonist of Anglo-Iraqi co-operation, was returned to power and punished those who took active part in causing the rupture of relations with Great Britain. Further, Nuri's Government sought collaboration with the countries fighting the Axis Powers which had signed the Declaration of the United Nations (1 January 1942). Nuri, it will be recalled, who advocated the establishment of diplomatic

<sup>1</sup> Certain advocates of close Anglo-Iraqi collaboration went so far as to declare that the Treaty of 1930 was the only guarantee for the independence of Iraq. See a statement to this effect made by Rustum Haydar in 1937 in Parliament, *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 8th Sess., 1937, p. 304.

relations with the United States in 1940, selected Ali Jawdat, former Prime Minister, as Iraq's first Minister to the United States. Friendly relations with China were established by concluding a Treaty of Amity and Friendship between Iraq and the Chinese Republic (16 March 1942).

The restoration of the constitutional regime not only brought about understanding with Britain, but also a genuine desire to grant her all facilities for the prosecution of the war against the Axis Powers. From Iraq a British force was able to invade the Levant in June 1941, in collaboration with the British and Free French forces which launched their attack from Palestine. When Germany attacked Russia, General Quinan was instructed to prepare for the defence of Iraq against a possible German advance through Turkey or Persia. In August 1941 Quinan entered Persia as part of an Anglo-Soviet move to eliminate German influence in Persia. By the end of 1941 considerable forces were concentrated in Iraq and Persia, which were to check the Nazi forces in case they broke into the Middle East by way of Turkey or the Caucasus. All facilities of transport and local products were supplied by Iraq in order to help Britain's war effort against Germany.<sup>1</sup> In 1942 a unified command for Iraq and Persia was formed under General Sir H. Maitland Wilson, who was made directly responsible to the War Office. In addition to his primary task of fighting the Germans in case they broke through the Caucasus, Wilson was instructed first, to secure the safety of oilfields in Iraq and Persia; and secondly, to transport supplies from the Persian Gulf to Russia.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, the Iraqi Government moved a step further in her collaboration with Britain by declaring war on the Axis Powers on 16-17 January 1943. The initiative came from the Iraqi Government itself. On 12 November 1942 a discussion was initiated by a number of deputies in Parliament regarding the Atlantic Charter and the Declaration of the United Nations, which prompted thirty-two deputies to submit a proposal to the Government to 'adhere to the principles of the Atlantic Charter in order that she [Iraq] shall take her proper place at the Peace Conference'.<sup>3</sup> On 16 January 1943 Nuri, in response

<sup>1</sup> For a statement of Iraq's war efforts see the account given by Salman ash-Shaykh Da'ud in *al-Akhbar*, 17 Jan. 1945; and by Shaykh Muhammad Rida ash-Shabibi in *az-Zaman*, 10 and 18 Jan. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> See Field-Marshal Lord Wilson, *Eight Years Overseas* (London, Hutchinson, 1948), pp. 135-47.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 9th Sess., 1943, pp. 10-11, 15-22.

to this proposal, made a statement in Parliament in which he declared that adherence to the principles of the Atlantic Charter and the Declaration of the United Nations required a formal declaration of war on Axis Powers.<sup>1</sup> On 11 January Nuri submitted a memorandum to the Council of Ministers in which he denounced the inimical attitude of the Axis Powers to Iraq. He said:

The most obvious proof of the wicked intentions of those Powers towards Iraq is what they have done and are still doing in spreading false rumours about this country and intriguing against her, and by the continuous attacks directed by their broadcasting stations against the noble House of Hashim and by abusing every person who may be legitimately in power in Iraq. By all this they hope to persuade Iraq to disavow her legal pledges contained in the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of Alliance.<sup>2</sup>

'It was the duty of Iraq', continued Nuri, 'to stand by the side of her ally Great Britain and her Allies ever since the declaration of this war. But she was unable to do so as she was engaged in fighting Axis intrigues in her own country.' Nuri argued that it was in Iraq's own interests to 'support any policy which tends to ensure the freedom of peoples and resist aggression'. The Council of Ministers passed a resolution declaring war on the Axis Powers as from midnight of 16-17 January 1943. The Regent issued a decree on 13 January declaring a state of war with Germany, Italy, and Japan; and Parliament, at its meeting on 20 January 1943, unanimously approved the decree.<sup>3</sup> Germany, Italy, and Japan were informed of Iraq's decision through the representatives of the protecting Powers, the Turkish Minister for Italy and Japan, and the Swiss Consul for Germany. It was thus that Iraq formally became a belligerent Power. She subscribed to the Declaration of the United Nations, signed at Washington on 1 January 1942, as the twenty-seventh member.

On the news of Iraq's declaration of war on the Axis Powers (the first independent Middle Eastern country to join the war on the side of Britain), Churchill sent the following message to Nuri on 16 January 1943:<sup>4</sup>

The news of the declaration of war by Iraq has been welcomed in this country. It has given us special satisfaction to realize that the State which

<sup>1</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 9th Sess., 1943, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> For text of General Nuri's memorandum see Iraq Government, *Documents relating to the Adherence of Iraq to the Declaration of the United Nations* (Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1943), pp. 2-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 9th Sess., 1943, pp. 74-78, 79.

<sup>4</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *Onwards to Victory: the Fourth Volume of War Speeches*, compiled by Charles Eade (London, Cassell, 1944), p. 30.

we helped to create during the First World War will henceforth participate with us in the present struggle.

When His Majesty's Government first accepted responsibility for guiding the future of the new Kingdom of Iraq, they made her complete and early independence their goal. That goal was reached ten years ago, and since then the enemies of our two countries have spared no efforts to disturb our friendly relations. They have been lavish with falsehood, and have even resorted to force. But they could achieve no lasting success.

The Iraqi Parliament, by the free and independent exercise of their constitutional powers, have now on their own initiative decided to show the world Iraq's adherence to the aims and ideals of the United Nations, and her fundamental opposition to the dark forces which seek to enslave humanity.

The struggle will be hard, but the end is sure, and we rejoice to have you at our side.

#### IRAQ AND THE ARAB LEAGUE

The Arabs of Iraq, as indeed most of the Arabs throughout the Middle East, aspired to form some kind of union, and this movement came to be known as pan-Arabism. They argue that since the Arab countries are bound by common aspirations and by a community of interests—geography, history, and culture—they are entitled to form a union. During the period between the two world wars the Arabs were too much preoccupied with their struggle with the European Powers to achieve unity; but during and after the Second World War they made certain strides in the movement of unity which culminated in the establishment of the Arab League.

Great interest in Arab unity was aroused both in Iraq and the other Arab countries when Great Britain declared, to the satisfaction of the moderate nationalists, her 'full support of any scheme [of unity] that commands general approval'. Great Britain's promise was given by Eden in his Mansion House speech on 29 May 1941, when the Rashid Ali regime had just collapsed in Iraq. His statement is of particular interest to the Arabs and deserves to be quoted in full:<sup>1</sup>

This country has a long tradition of friendship with the Arabs, a friendship that has been proved by deeds, not words alone. We have countless well-wishers among them, as they have many friends here. Some days ago I said in the House of Commons that His Majesty's Government had great sympathy with Syrian aspirations for independence. I should like to repeat that now. But I would go further. The Arab world has made great strides since the settlement reached at the end of the last war, and many Arab

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, 30 May 1941.



thinkers desire for the Arab peoples a greater degree of unity than they now enjoy. In reaching out towards this unity they hope for our support. No such appeal from our friends should go unanswered. It seems to me both natural and right that the cultural and economic ties between the Arab countries and the political ties, too, should be strengthened. His Majesty's Government for their part will give their full support to any scheme that commands general approval.

In the autumn of 1941 General Nuri returned to power in Baghdad after the collapse of the Rashid Ali regime. Nuri, it will be recalled, advocated co-operation with the democratic Powers and opposed the drift of the extremists towards the Axis. He resumed negotiations with the British authorities on Middle East affairs and advocated Arab union which would include Syria.

Early in 1942 Nuri paid a visit to Cairo and had conversations with R. G. Casey, Great Britain's Minister of State for the Middle East, with whom he discussed Arab problems. Since France had ceased to be a decisive factor in Middle East politics, Nuri contended, it rested with Great Britain to support the Arabs in realizing their national aspirations (namely, the unity and independence of the Arab countries). Nuri, it seems, was requested to put on record his general proposals for Arab unity which, after his return to Baghdad, he submitted in a note to Casey. Nuri's proposals may be summarized as follows:<sup>1</sup>

1. Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan to be reunited to constitute one State.
2. The people of that State to decide its form of government, whether they have a monarchical or republican regime, or whether it be a unitary or federal State.
3. An Arab League to be formed; Iraq and Syria to join at once, the other Arab States to join if and when they desire.
4. The Arab League to have a permanent Council nominated by the member States and presided over by one of the rulers of the States, to be chosen in a manner acceptable to the States concerned.
5. The Arab Council to be responsible for: (a) defence, (b) foreign affairs, (c) currency, (d) communications, (e) customs, and (f) protection of minority rights.
6. The Jews in Palestine to have semi-autonomy, and the rights to their own rural and urban district administration including schools,

<sup>1</sup> Nuri as-Sa'id, *Arab Independence and Unity* (Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1943), pp. 11-12.

health institutes, and police, subject to general supervision to the Syrian State and under international guarantee.

7. Jerusalem, a city to which members of all religions must have free access for pilgrimage and worship, to have a special commission composed of the three theocratic religions to ensure this result.

The new circumstances of the Second World War made Egypt, which had taken in the past an independent course in the fulfilment of her national aspirations, realize that it would be advantageous if she led a bloc of several Arab States in the post-war period. Nahhas Pasha, then Prime Minister of Egypt, may have been encouraged by Great Britain to take the leadership of Arab unity; but Egypt was certainly the leading country in the Arab world, economically and culturally, and her political leadership was welcomed by the Arabs. When Nuri's scheme for Arab unity was submitted to Nahhas Pasha it was given lukewarm support. For this reason his proposals (including Amir Abd-Allah's Greater Syria scheme) only resulted in a more loose, or confederate, union comprising not only the countries of the Fertile Crescent, but also Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Yaman.

Nahhas Pasha began to discuss the scheme of Arab unity by inviting the various Arab Governments to send their representatives to Cairo in order to sound their several official opinions. The first Arab country to respond to his invitations was Iraq. Nuri went in person to Cairo and his conversations with Nahhas lasted from 31 July to 5 August 1943. These conversations were merely 'an exchange of personal views on the project', as Nuri declared in the Senate upon his return to Baghdad, but agreement on general principles was reached. The representatives of the other Arab countries followed Iraq and the conversations were completed by January 1944.

On 25 September 1944 a Preparatory Committee, composed of the delegates of the Arab States, met in Alexandria to discuss the various proposals set forth in the preliminary talks with a view to working out a scheme of unity acceptable to all the delegates. Before the meeting there was a widely held opinion that an Arab conference without a Palestinian delegate was 'a contradiction in terms'. An invitation was accordingly extended to Palestine to send a representative. Musa al-Alami was the selected representative of the various Arab parties in Palestine; and he presented the Palestine case before the Preparatory Committee.

In his opening speech Nahhas outlined the work of the Preparatory

Committee and declared that the delegates were first to be asked to outline their views on the Arab unity scheme as already stated during the preliminary conversations. The Committee was then to proceed to work out a general scheme which would be acceptable to all.

At the outset it was realized that full union, with a central executive authority, was impossible at this stage of development of Arab nationalism. Some of the Arab States asserted their independence, but others were not prepared to renounce their sovereignty in favour of a full union. Only Syria stood for full-fledged Arab unity and was quite prepared to renounce her sovereignty in favour of a central executive authority. Prime Minister Sa'd-Allah al-Jabiri, the Syrian delegate, expressed the attitude of his Government in his speech at the opening session by quoting a statement made by Shukri al-Quwatli, President of the Syrian Republic, that 'Syria will never allow a flag higher than her own to be raised in her sky save that of Arab unity'. Iraq and Transjordan were not in favour of full unity, but advocated union on a federal basis. Lebanon, while asserting her independence, pledged co-operation with the other Arab countries. Her attitude, as stated by Prime Minister Riyad as-Sulh in his speech at the opening session, was as follows: 'Lebanon has pledged herself never to be a seat of imperialism, or a channel for the colonization of her sister Arab countries.' Saudi Arabia and Yaman reluctantly agreed to join a loose association of independent Arab States. Finally Egypt, who took the role of the mediator, did not advocate any definite plan of unity, but Nahhas Pasha declared that his Government was prepared to go along the path of Arab unity as far as the other Arab Governments were jointly prepared to go. Thus the more idealistic proposals were dropped, and in practice only those proposals which were of practical value were finally adopted. The form of unity acceptable to all had to be in the nature of loose federation in order to satisfy both local and dynastic interests.

At the sixth meeting of the Preparatory Committee, on 4 October 1944, the problem of Syrian unity was fully discussed. Amir Abd-Allah, ruler of Transjordan, had already advocated the so-called 'Greater Syria' scheme and endeavoured to carry it out within the larger Arab unity project. Nuri, it will be recalled, had incorporated the 'Greater Syria' plan in his note to Casey, in which he proposed to unite Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan to constitute one State. At this juncture this plan was fully and frankly discussed by the Preparatory Committee. The Syrian and Transjordan delegates un-

hesitatingly welcomed the proposal. But it was understood that Transjordan welcomed the plan only on condition that her ruler, Amir Abd-Allah, would be the King of the new State. Jamil Mardam, the Syrian delegate, declared that while Syria supported the project, she preferred to maintain her republican regime. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia was not in favour of Syrian unity with Transjordan, fearing an extension of Amir Abd-Allah's authority to Damascus. Lebanon, too, was not prepared to join such a union, while Palestine's position was complicated by the Zionist claims. The 'Greater Syria' scheme was thus received with mixed feelings by the Preparatory Committee and dismissed as premature in the circumstances.

Finally, the problem of Palestine was carefully examined. Though it was not an independent Arab country, Palestine was represented by Musa al-Alami (chosen by the various Arab parties in Palestine), who stated his country's case before the Preparatory Committee. Alami stressed the gravity of the Arab situation in Palestine, due mainly to the continual flow of Jewish immigrants and to the sale of Arab land to Jewish owners. He pointed out, likewise, that the Arabs of Palestine were prepared to accept the proposals of the White Paper of 1939, which Great Britain had declared to be binding, as a basis for the settlement of the Palestine problem. Alami proposed, in the first place, to establish a fund with a view to developing Arab-owned lands in Palestine and thus to make it unnecessary for the Arabs to sell to the Jews. In the second place, he proposed to set up Arab bureaux in London and Washington in order to present the Arab case concerning Palestine to the English and American public. Alami's statement of the Arab situation in Palestine was so impressive that the Preparatory Committee at once approved his proposals.

On 7 October 1944 a Protocol was signed by all the members of the Preparatory Committee except Saudi Arabia and Yaman.<sup>1</sup> The Alexandria Protocol provided for the establishment of a League of Arab States, composed of the independent Arab States which desired to join the new organization. The League would be governed by a council called The Council of the League of Arab States, whose membership would be based on the sovereign equality of the member-States. The purpose of the League would be:

... to execute agreements reached between member-States, to hold periodic

<sup>1</sup> The delegates of Saudi Arabia and Yaman declared that they had to submit the Protocol to their Governments for approval before signature. Later on Saudi Arabia signed the Protocol on 7 Jan. and Yaman on 4 Feb. 1945.



meetings which will strengthen the relations between those States; to co-ordinate their political plans so as to ensure their co-operation, and to safeguard their independence and sovereignty against any aggression by suitable means; and to supervise in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries.

Members of the League might not pursue foreign policies harmful to the policy of the League or to any one of its members. The independence of Lebanon within her present frontiers was also confirmed. Regarding Palestine, the Protocol stated:

The Committee is of the opinion that Palestine constitutes an important part of the Arab world and that the rights of the Arabs in Palestine cannot be touched without danger to the peace and stability of the Arab world. Furthermore, the Committee is of the opinion that the engagements entered into by Great Britain involving the cessation of Jewish immigration, the safeguarding of lands belonging to the Arabs, and the progress of Palestine towards independence constitute rights acquired by the Arabs and that their execution will be a step towards the desired goal and the return of peace and stability.

While recognizing the horrors of persecution undergone by the Jews in Europe, the Preparatory Committee declared that 'nothing would be more arbitrary or unfair than settling this problem by another injustice, the victims of which would be the Arabs in Palestine, to whatever religious faith they belong'.

A special political committee was appointed to prepare the draft pact of the League, based on the Alexandria Protocol. The committee held sixteen meetings (14 February–3 March 1945) and prepared a draft pact which was more elaborate but did not essentially differ in substance from the Alexandria Protocol. On 17 March 1945 the Preparatory Committee of the Arab League met at a general Arab Conference in Cairo and discussed the draft pact of the political committee. With minor alterations the pact was finally approved and signed on 22 March.

Under Article 20 the pact was to come into force fifteen days after the Secretary-General had received the instruments of ratification. On 25 April Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, and Saudi Arabia deposited their ratifications, and the League legally came into existence on 10 May.

The Arab Pact provides for the establishment of an Arab League whose members are those Arab States who have signed or will sign that pact. The League is made up of a Council, composed of the representatives of its members, with one vote for every member-State

regardless of the number of representatives; a General Secretariat for organizing the work of the League; and a number of committees dealing with various matters connected with the Arab League.

Membership of the League is open only to independent Arab States. The original members who signed the pact were Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Yaman.

The purpose of the Arab League, as stated in its pact, is to promote the common interests of the member-States, to realize closer collaboration among them, and to safeguard their independence and sovereignty. Since the Arab countries which have not yet won their independence were not eligible for membership, the Arab League extended its scope 'to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries'. As stated in the pact, co-operation among member-States will be specifically promoted in the following matters: (1) economic and financial matters, including trade, customs, currency, and industry; (2) communications, including railways, roads, aviation, navigation, and posts and telegraphs; (3) cultural matters; (4) matters connected with nationality, passports, visas, execution of judgment, and extradition; (5) matters of social welfare; and (6) matters of health.

The use of force for the settlement of disputes between members is prohibited. 'Should there arise among them a dispute that does not involve the independence of a State, its sovereignty or its territorial integrity, and should the two contending parties apply to the Council for the settlement of this dispute, the decision of the Council shall then be effective and obligatory.'<sup>1</sup> The Council of the League will mediate in a dispute which may lead to war between two member-States or between a member-State and another in order to conciliate them. Decisions relating to arbitrations and mediation are to be taken by majority vote only.

In the case of aggression or the threat of aggression, the member-State may request an immediate meeting of the League Council. The Council will decide, by a unanimous vote, upon the measures to be taken against the aggressor. If the aggressor were a member-State of the Arab League, 'the vote of that State will not be counted in determining unanimity'.<sup>2</sup> The nature of sanctions, whether military or economic, to be applied against the aggressor, is not defined. As in the League of Nations, the Council is to consider what measures would be most effective in the circumstances. The only specific

<sup>1</sup> Art. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 6.

sanction mentioned in the Arab Pact to be applied automatically is dismissal. Article 18 states: 'The Council of the League may consider any State that is not fulfilling the obligations resulting from this Pact as excluded from the League, by a decision taken by unanimous vote of all the States except the State referred to.'

Withdrawal from the League is voluntary—it takes effect a year after notification is sent to the League Council. But if a member-State does not approve an amendment to the pact carried by two-thirds of the members, that State may withdraw when the amendment becomes effective.

From the time when the Arab League was established, it was confronted with serious political problems before it had time to grow and gain strength. The Franco-Syrian dispute, which had arisen only one month after the League was legally established, required calling an extraordinary session in June and the Council of the League passed a resolution to the effect that the League decided to take necessary measures in order to resist French 'aggression'. Fortunately, the Syrian crisis passed owing to the support given to Syria by the Great Powers when the case was taken up by the Security Council of the United Nations, and thus the Arab League was spared the effort of facing France alone.

Hardly had the Syrian crisis passed when the League was faced almost at the same time by two more serious problems which greatly affected its prestige among the Arab States and in the world community. The two issues were the Palestine problem and the dynastic rivalry whose first feature was reflected in the so-called 'Greater Syria' scheme. The Palestine problem, which required the solidarity and the full strength of the Arabs to forestall the establishment of Israel, confronted the Arabs before they had time to settle their dynastic differences and this had greatly weakened the Arab League when it decided to go to war with Israel. There was, it is true, a great deal of solidarity, or show of solidarity, in the initial stages of the Palestine conflict; but soon the dynastic motives conspired to prevent the League from taking any concerted action in the struggle with Israel. Iraq, which had no immediate interest in Palestine save the larger interest of resisting Zionist claims, had its share in the dynastic rivalry both because the two rulers of Iraq and Transjordan belong to the Hashimi family, and because of its recent quarrel with Egypt on Syrian-Iraqi unity.

On the social, economic, and cultural plane, the Arab League laid

down more ambitious programmes, which, if they could be carried out, would have more far-reaching significance in achieving Arab solidarity than its political activities. Special committees were organized to study plans of postal and customs union, unification of communications, expansion of commercial relations, adoption of single passport system, and co-operation in legal, educational, and health matters. Some of these plans have reached the stage of being made into legal agreements, but mainly owing to political complications within the League it has been difficult to put them into effect.

Its critics have condemned the Arab League as a failure merely because it could not solve pending Arab issues. That the League has some defects in its structure and in its procedure must be admitted; but in its present form the League represents a stage of development in Arab regional organization which is capable of further improvement. The Arab League may be dissolved; but its dissolution will most likely be in favour of certain other organizations which may give expression to the desire for co-operation in Arab public affairs and the will to unity which is becoming increasingly strong among the Arabs.

#### RELATIONS BETWEEN IRAQ AND TRANSJORDAN

From 1941 the two Hashimi kingdoms of Iraq and Transjordan developed the habit of mutual consultation on foreign affairs. Their representatives at the Alexandria and Cairo conferences in 1944 and 1945 expressed almost identical viewpoints, and later on, after the establishment of the Arab League, both countries entered into treaty relationship with Turkey in defiance of the protests of the other members of the Arab League.

Early in 1945 the rapprochement between Iraq and Transjordan inspired their two rulers to discuss the possibility of uniting the two countries. Conversations between the two Hashimi capitals continued for over a year about what sort of a union should be created. During King Abd-Allah's visit to Iraq in September 1946, a project of unity was drawn up in which the two countries would retain separate identity, but would unify their military, cultural, and diplomatic affairs. There would be standardized military equipment and training, and in foreign countries where only one of the two countries was represented, the representative would act for both Iraq and Transjordan. In such cases the representative would fly the common flag,



which would be the original Hashimi flag flown during the Arab Revolt in the First World War. Politically the two countries would establish a Council composed of members appointed by each country. The Council would meet alternately in Baghdad and Amman to consider general matters affecting both countries. There would also be a customs union and co-operation in all matters of common interest.<sup>1</sup>

This scheme aroused criticism both abroad and within the two countries. The neighbouring Arab countries, especially Syria and Lebanon, showed grave concern lest the scheme might be a step to achieving King Abd-Allah's 'Greater Syria' project. The Arab League, it seems, was also not favourably disposed, though such a scheme of unity would be legally feasible within the framework of the Arab Pact. There was also opposition from the ranks of the Arab nationalists, mainly in Iraq, who criticized the scheme on the grounds that the union would cause dissension among the members of the Arab League. Moreover, some Iraqi critics thought that the union would permit Transjordan to interfere in the domestic affairs of Iraq and to secure Iraq's support in her expansionist policy. Finally, opposition came from certain critics who argued that Transjordan's treaty with Great Britain might lead to indirect British interference in Iraqi affairs.

Owing to so much opposition the scheme of union was finally reduced to a Treaty of Alliance and Brotherhood between the two Hashimi kingdoms. The treaty was signed on 15 April 1947, and became effective when ratifications were exchanged on 10 June. The treaty provided for a closer alliance and 'eternal' brotherhood between Iraq and Transjordan, and that both parties would 'consult with each other whenever circumstances demand fulfilment of the purposes intended by the preamble to this Treaty'. The preamble to the treaty stated that security, co-operation, and complete mutual understanding on matters affecting the interests of the two countries were the purposes of the treaty. It made provision for co-operation in unifying military technique and training, in diplomatic representation abroad, and in settling disputes with a third State by peaceful means. In case of aggression by a third State, the two parties 'must consult on the nature of the measures that must be used to unite their efforts to repel and ward off that aggression' (Art. 5). Article 6 permitted military

<sup>1</sup> For a summary of the scheme see *al-Ahram*, 11 Feb. 1946, and *The Times*, 20 Sept. 1946.

intervention by one party to suppress disorders or a rebellion in the other.

The treaty was criticized in Parliament and the press for permitting the military intervention of one party in the internal affairs of the other. The reason for inserting such a clause is to be explained only by the coup d'état of 1941 when help was badly needed by the Regent against Rashid Ali. The Arab Legion, it will be recalled, collaborated with the British forces in overthrowing Rashid Ali.<sup>1</sup>

The treaty was approved by Parliament by a majority of 83 out of 132, but most of those who opposed it absented themselves and only two voted against it. The treaty came into force on 10 June 1947.

(Since 1947 Transjordan has made great strides towards the achievement of complete independence and the incorporation of Arab Palestine into her body politic.) Jordan, the new name adopted after this expansion, faced several internal and external difficulties, many owing to the rivalry between Egypt and Iraq. Jordan's attempt to adhere to the Baghdad Pact in 1956 rendered her position more precarious. Feeling his position insecure, King Husayn wavered between the Egyptian and Iraqi blocs after his country terminated British financial aid. For a short time American aid helped Jordan to survive, and when Egypt and Syria announced their union at the end of January 1958, the two Hashimi rulers sought to cement their relations by organizing a loose federal system to counterbalance the United Arab Republic. The basic principles of unity enunciated by King Abd-Allah in September 1946 were brought to life in mid-February 1958 by the announcement of a plan of Arab Federation, based on the union of the two monarchies in matters of defence, foreign relations, customs, and education, with a federal Parliament and executive, King Faysal II to be head of the Federation. The two kings, however, remained independent rulers within their kingdoms and sought to co-ordinate their policies only in matters of common interest. The scheme was denounced by its opponents as a union between rulers, not between peoples, and proved to be very unpopular among the Iraqis. It also aroused suspicion among the Kurds who, while they were prepared to be Iraqi citizens, were not prepared to be the subjects of a larger Arab structure. The Federation was repudiated immediately after the coup d'état of July 1958 and was subsequently declared abolished by King Husayn.

<sup>1</sup> See Kamil al-Chadirchi, 'What is behind the Treaty between Iraq and Transjordan?', *Sawt al-Ahali*, 23 Apr. 1947.

## THE MIDDLE EAST PACTS

Since the Sa'dabad Pact had virtually become a dead letter when the Second World War broke out, when the war was over it was realized, especially by Turkey, that a closer union was needed to meet the new balance of power in the Middle East.

The initiative for a new alliance came from Turkey. When the Regent of Iraq, accompanied by General Nuri, was on a visit to England in July 1945, he received an invitation to visit Turkey on his way back to Iraq. In September the Regent and Nuri were the guests of President İnönü where an informal proposal of forming a Middle Eastern bloc was discussed. The Turks, who could no longer depend on the Balkan States for support against the Soviet Union (since the Balkans, with the exception of Greece, had fallen under Soviet influence), turned to the Arab East instead. In so doing they were acting in conformity with British and American foreign policy, for these Powers were also threatened by Russian ambitions in the Middle East. The rapprochement of the Arab world with Turkey would complete the Middle Eastern chain begun in Greece for the 'containment' of the Soviet Union.

The initial reaction to Turkey's scheme was quite favourable, for Nuri had already declared in favour of a stand with the West against Russia.<sup>1</sup> But when Nuri began his negotiations with Turkey in March 1946, he was no longer in office and was not empowered to negotiate a political treaty. He asked the Suwaydi Government for permission to negotiate such a treaty, but Suwaydi permitted him to sign technical but not political agreements.

Nevertheless Nuri initialed a treaty of friendship and *bon voisinage*, and then asked the Government to approve it.<sup>2</sup> It was an embarrassing situation and the Suwaydi Government did not want to take a hostile attitude towards Turkey by denouncing the treaty. Apart from the technical protocols, the treaty was in the nature of a regional security pact which provided for mutual consultation in foreign affairs, the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, and co-operation in regional matters within the framework of the United Nations Charter.

To solve the problem, the Suwaydi Government proposed to accept

<sup>1</sup> Nuri as-Sa'id, 'Our Position between the Russians and the Anglo-Americans', *al-Hilal*, Jan. 1947, pp. 72-73.

<sup>2</sup> For the inside story of the treaty see the account of Sa'd Salih (Minister of the Interior under Suwaydi) in *al-Ahrar*, 3 June 1947.

the treaty with one reservation, namely, that its provisions should not contravene Iraq's obligations under the Arab League Pact. Turkey did not approve the Suwaydi reservation, but the new Government formed by Salih Jabr in March 1947 accepted the treaty without reservation.

When the treaty was submitted to Parliament for approval it was attacked both in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The main points of criticism may be summarized as follows: first, the treaty was not negotiated with the free will of Iraq, but was 'imposed'. Secondly, the treaty might involve Iraq in a conflict with the Soviet Union, which Iraq wished to avoid. Thirdly, the treaty was regarded as inconsistent with the Arab Pact. Fourthly, the treaty provided that Iraq would recognize the present frontiers of Turkey, which implied recognition of the annexation of Alexandretta by Turkey without Syria's approval. Nuri, who very ably defended the treaty, declared that its provisions would not contravene Iraq's obligations under the Pact; that Iraq's obligations in this treaty were the same as those which she had accepted in the Sa'dabad Pact, and that Turkey pledged herself to support the Arabs on the Palestine question. Though the official text of the treaty was in French, only the Arabic translation was submitted to Parliament. The treaty, in spite of all opposition, was approved by the Chamber of Deputies on 7 June 1947, having been opposed by only 13 deputies of 101 present; and by the Senate on 12 June, opposed by only 2 of 13 senators present.

Before the Palestine War Great Britain, still enjoying great prestige in the Arab world, tried to rely on the Arab League and on her bilateral treaties for the defence of this area. The failure of the Arab League to protect Arab rights in Palestine and create solidarity among the Arabs prompted Britain to reformulate her bilateral arrangements with the Arab States. Her treaty relations with Jordan temporarily helped her to maintain an important strategic position; but her abortive treaties with Egypt (1947) and Iraq (1948) rendered her position hopeless, mainly owing to the rising tide of Arab nationalism (intensified by the creation of Israel) and to Communist and anti-colonial propaganda. Britain soon realized that the bilateral approach to regional security had to be abandoned. Meanwhile the United States, finding Britain's position had been weakened in the Middle East, began to take increasing interest in this area as demonstrated by her participation in the Tripartite Declaration of 25 May 1950. But the Middle East remained the weakest link in the chain of a ring-fence



which the United States and Britain designed to erect round the Soviet Union. Since Turkey and Greece are the only eastern Mediterranean Powers that have joined N.A.T.O., it was contended that an arm of N.A.T.O. might be extended to the Middle East from that direction.

The initiative for approaching the Arab States to erect a security structure came from Turkey. At the outset Turkey approached Egypt, but the latter preferred to wait until she had coped with her internal problems. Since Iraq had already entered into an agreement with Turkey in 1946, a regional security structure was quickly erected by these two Powers. The Turco-Iraqi—now called the Baghdad—Pact, was signed on 24 February 1955. It was the first link in the 'Northern Tier', later joined by Britain on 5 April, Pakistan on 23 September, and Persia on 12 October.

The pact provided for mutual co-operation among its signatories in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter. The signatories pledged not to interfere in the internal affairs of one another, but agreed to co-ordinate their efforts in matters of defence and security. For this purpose a permanent council was provided, with a secretariat and various committees, for co-ordinating the work of the signatory powers. Although the United States has not yet joined this pact, she has participated in its various activities.

It was contemplated that the other Arab countries would soon adhere to the pact. But no sooner had Iraq signed it than Egypt, feeling outmanoeuvred by Iraq, violently attacked the pact on the grounds that it violated the Arab League Security Pact. Iraq replied that she had common interests with Turkey and Persia and that she had the right to enter into treaty arrangements with her neighbours against Communist infiltration. The other Arab States, remote from Russia, do not feel the threat of Communist aggression but, as neighbours of Israel, are fearful only of Israeli expansion. It was announced on 24 March 1959 that Iraq had withdrawn from the Baghdad Pact.<sup>1</sup>

#### SPECIAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRAQ

Great Britain's adherence to the Baghdad Pact afforded both Britain and Iraq an opportunity to reorganize their bilateral treaty relations on a new basis. The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 was terminated, and replaced by a Special Agreement concluded on 4 April

<sup>1</sup> See M. Khadduri, 'The Problem of Regional Security in the Middle East', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 10 (1957), pp. 12-22.

1955 in accordance with Article 1 of the Baghdad Pact. The Special Agreement provided that 'there shall be close co-operation' between Britain and Iraq and that this co-operation will include the planning, combined training, and the provision of all facilities agreed upon between the two Governments for the purpose of maintaining Iraq's armed forces in a state of efficiency and readiness. Article 6 provided:

The Government of the United Kingdom shall, at the request of the Government of Iraq, do their best

- (a) to afford help to Iraq:
  - (i) in creating and maintaining an effective Iraqi Air Force by means of joint training and exercises in the Middle East; and
  - (ii) in the efficient maintenance and operation of such airfields and other installations as may from time to time be agreed to be necessary;
- (b) to join with the Government of Iraq in
  - (i) establishing an efficient system of warning against air attack;
  - (ii) ensuring that equipment for the defence of Iraq is kept in Iraq in a state of readiness; and
- (iii) training and equipping Iraqi forces for the defence of their country; and
- (c) to make available in Iraq technical personnel of the British forces for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of paragraphs (a) and (b) of this article.<sup>1</sup>

The agreement provided also that in the event of an attack on Iraq or the threat of an attack, Britain at the request of Iraq would 'make available assistance, including if necessary armed forces to help to defend Iraq'. Iraq was to provide 'all facilities and assistance' to enable Britain to give such aid (Art. 8).

In accordance with this agreement the two air bases at Shu'ayba and Basra were handed over to the Iraq Government, but British personnel were to remain in Iraq to assist the Iraqi forces with training and with the installation, operation, and maintenance of facilities and equipment, and to service aircraft. The command and administration of British personnel would remain a British responsibility, but the senior British officer would act as liaison with the Iraqi officer in command. The Government of Iraq would be responsible for the protection of all airfields and installations in Iraq, but Britain would provide the necessary experts and technicians for advice and training of Iraq personnel. The provisions relating to the status of

<sup>1</sup> See *Special Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Iraq and Exchanges of Notes*, Cmd. 9429 (1955), pp. 2-11.

forces of parties to the North Atlantic Treaty were to be applicable to the forces of Britain and Iraq in the territories of one another. This agreement needed no ratification by Parliament since it was regarded as a supplementary agreement to the Baghdad pact, which Parliament had previously ratified. The agreement solved the long-standing problem of revising the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 which made Anglo-Iraqi relations tense in 1948; but the new agreement, based on mutuality of interests, raised no problems similar to the Portsmouth Treaty, which was then regarded as an unequal treaty.)

On 30 March 1959 the British Foreign Office stated that as a result of Iraq's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact, the Special Agreement also lapsed.

## CHAPTER XIV

### PROSPECTS OF REFORM

DURING the decade that followed the Second World War the need for sweeping reforms was often reiterated in Parliament and Baghdad political circles, and both the elder politicians and the new generation were agreed that constructive reforms were urgently needed if Iraq were to take her proper place in the community of nations. But there was no agreement as to what approach they should follow and they were inevitably drawn into vain political recriminations (in Parliament in particular) on what particular reforms should be carried out (such as revising the Electoral Law, amending the constitution, and strengthening parliamentary control).

Social and economic reforms, however, could not be achieved merely by 'overhauling' the system of government. It is true that the democratic system of Iraq existed only in 'form', not in operation; but democracy, like any other system of government, is only an instrument, which cannot operate in a vacuum—it functions in accordance with the existing forces in society. If democracy in Iraq were dominated by landlords, tribal shaykhs, and a group of elder politicians forming a circle of 'oligarchs', it was not the fault of democracy itself that it functioned in Iraq as a virtual oligarchy, since it was bound to operate in accordance with the social milieu in which it existed.

To achieve social and economic reforms Iraq needs the capital and technical know-how. The new generation argued, however, that even if the capital and know-how were provided reforms could not be achieved before the machinery of government was made immune from the evil influence of the oligarchs.<sup>1</sup> This seems to be arguing in a circle, for a start must be made. During 1950, when circumstances for revising the oil agreements had become favourable and a substantial increase in royalties was expected, some public men began to advocate the establishment of an independent governmental agency

<sup>1</sup> See *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 13th Sess., 1952-3, pp. 8-17, 59-61, 134-8, 140-1, 149-50, 390-6, 404-25; M. Hadid, 'Troubles in Iraq', *The Times*, 26 Nov. 1952; and Husayn Jamil, *Da'wa Ila Islah Dasturi* (Baghdad, 1951).



which should be entrusted with the oil royalties to be spent on economic development. Hence the Iraq Development Board was created to speed up constructive reforms. The other step was the happy compromise achieved in the oil settlement—avoiding the unfortunate Persian nationalization experiment—which provided the necessary funds for constructive projects. These two forward steps were perhaps Iraq's greatest achievements since the Second World War.

#### THE OIL AGREEMENTS

The history of Iraq's oil concessions is outside the scope of this book, but a brief account of their origin may be helpful for a discussion of the 1951 oil agreement and its impact on Iraq.

The first effective oil concession in Iraq was granted on 28 June 1914 to the Turkish Petroleum Company, representing the interests of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, the Deutsche Bank, and the Royal Dutch-Shell group (through its subsidiary, the Anglo-Saxon Oil Company), agreement having been reached between them through governmental intervention on 19 March 1914. Under the concession the Company was promised a lease of 'the petroleum resources discovered, and to be discovered in the vilayets of Mosul and Baghdad'. In consequence of the First World War Germany lost her oil interests in the Ottoman Empire and in the San Remo Agreement of 24 April 1920 the German shares were given to France. American oil interests were also represented shortly afterwards.<sup>1</sup>

In March 1925 the Turkish Petroleum Company obtained a new concession from the Iraqi Government covering the whole country. Drilling operations began in April 1927 and oil was discovered in abundance at Qayyara on 13 October 1927 and at Baba Gurgur two days later. In June 1929 the name of the company was changed to Iraq Petroleum Company (I.P.C.) and its concession was limited in March 1931 to the area east of the Tigris.

The area west of the Tigris and north of latitude 33° was given in 1932 to the British Oil Development Company, formed in 1924 (with Italian, French-Swiss, German, and Dutch participation from 1930 to 1932) and later to be absorbed by the I.P.C. groups. In 1938 the Basra Petroleum Company (B.P.C.), formed by the parent com-

<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed account of the battle for concessions before and after the First World War see S. H. Longrigg, *Oil in the Middle East* (London, 1954); and Benjamin Shwadran, *The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers* (New York, 1955).

panies of I.P.C., was granted a concession over the remaining area not covered by I.P.C. and the associated Mosul Petroleum Company (M.P.C.).

Drilling in the Kirkuk field—at Baba Gurgur—began in June 1927. By 1932 some twenty-six wells had been drilled, and the construction of 12-inch pipelines to the Mediterranean terminals at Tripoli and Haifa were completed in 1934. By the time war broke out in 1939 the production of oil reached 90,000 barrels per day (about 4 million tons per year). The war curtailed, and at a certain time stopped, production; but it was resumed some time before the end of hostilities. By 1947 some eighty wells had been drilled; but a year later, when the Palestine War broke out, the pumping of oil to Haifa ceased and those who benefited from oil lost exports exceeding 6 million tons a year. Work on an alternative northern line began late in 1948 and in 1949 the combined northern lines gave double the former capacity. The construction of 30–32-inch pipeline to Banias was completed in 1952; its capacity was 15 million tons per year. This was considerably increased later.

Although no serious difficulties have arisen between the Iraqi Government and I.P.C. and its associates, certain demands which were formulated before the war were bound to reappear after the war. These demands in the main related to a revision of royalties and compensation on the basis of gold which both the Company and the Iraqi Government agreed to settle by arbitration;<sup>1</sup> the whole problem was, however, settled by a completely revised agreement. The nationalization of the oil industry in Persia and the announcement of the 1950 agreement between Saudi Arabia and Aramco on a half-and-half basis of payment revolutionized the pattern of division of profits between the oil companies and governments in the Middle East. I.P.C., forestalling any possible move for nationalization in Iraq, wisely agreed to negotiate on the basis of the 50:50 formula, to the mutual advantage of Iraq and the Company.

While negotiations between the Company and the Iraqi Government were going on, the leaders of the Istiqlal Party, following Dr Musaddiq's tactics, began to agitate in the press for 'nationalization' and, supported by a number of independent members of Parliament, made a formal proposal in the Chamber of Deputies on 25 March 1951 requesting Parliament to enact a nationalization law.<sup>2</sup> This was

<sup>1</sup> For an account of these controversies see Longrigg, *Oil*, pp. 189–90.

<sup>2</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 12th Sess., 1950–1, pp. 427–8.

followed by several speeches made by Mahdi Kubba and Fa'iq as-Samarra'i, leader and deputy leader of the Istiqlal Party, in which they attacked the oil companies and demanded nationalization.<sup>1</sup> The other parties, the National Democratic and the Socialist Nation, while they did not go as far as to demand immediate nationalization, pressed the Government to obtain the utmost advantages from the Company.

Agreement was reached on 13 August 1951, subject to detailed re-drafting and to approval by the Iraqi Parliament. The agreement was signed in its final form on 3 February 1952, made retroactive to 1 January 1951. It was based on the 50:50 profit formula, before deduction of foreign taxes; and the Government was allowed to take in kind, as part of its total half-share, one-eighth of the net production of each of the companies and either to re-sell this to I.P.C. or to offer it on the open market. Further, the Government was assured that the production of oil would be maintained at the existing high level, I.P.C. and M.P.C. to produce 22 million tons per year from 1954 onwards and B.P.C. to increase production from 2 to 8 million tons per year as from 1956. In all circumstances except those of *force majeure* the Government's total income from oil operations was not to be less than 25 per cent. of the seaboard value of all crude oil exported by I.P.C. and M.P.C. and 33½ per cent. of crude exported by B.P.C. It was estimated that Iraq would receive no less than £30 million in 1953 and 1954, and no less than £50 million in 1955 and succeeding years, and the Government's income was guaranteed at not less than £25 million during 1955 and subsequent years. Crude oil for the Iraq refinery was to be supplied at Bayji at the nominal price of 5 shillings per ton. Iraq was to have two representatives on the companies' boards, and the number of Iraqi employees would be increased. A number of Iraqi students would be maintained annually by the Company while studying at British universities, and technical education for Iraqi workers would be further developed.<sup>2</sup>

The Speech from the Throne of 1 December 1951 referred to the signing of an oil agreement which would bring abundant royalties.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These speeches, as well as other Istiqlal statements on oil, were published in a booklet entitled *Fi Shu'un al-Naft* (Baghdad, 1951).

<sup>2</sup> A detailed communiqué to this effect was issued by the Government in the Iraqi press. See *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, 8 Mar. 1952. The full text of the agreement was submitted to Parliament and published in the proceedings (see *Proc. Senate*, 25th Sess., 1951-2, pp. 63-71).

<sup>3</sup> *Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 12th Sess., 1951-2, pp. 1-2.

but the agreement was not introduced to the Chamber of Deputies until 9 February 1952. The five Istiqlal members proposed that it should be referred to a joint session of the financial and economic parliamentary committees; when this proposal was defeated, they submitted their resignations in protest against the Government's action in rushing the agreement through before the public had had an opportunity to express an opinion on it.<sup>1</sup> The Prime Minister replied that the Istiqlal leaders had already ventilated their opinions in the press, demanding nationalization, but since the outcome of nationalization was still uncertain, it was not deemed wise to follow a similar course while Iraq needed resources for her development projects. The Iraqi Government had been able to obtain the best possible terms; should Persia obtain better terms, he promised to obtain similar terms for Iraq.<sup>2</sup> The agreement was approved on 14 February by a majority of 89 deputies; only 7 voted against it and 40 were absent.<sup>3</sup> In the Senate the agreement was severely criticized on certain matters of detail by Salih Jabr and Sayyid Abd al-Mahdi, and there was a sharp exchange of words between Nuri as-Sa'id and Salih Jabr, reflecting their political rivalry rather than disagreement on the basic principles of the oil settlement.<sup>4</sup> On 17 February the Senate approved the agreement by a majority of 17; only Sayyid Abd al-Mahdi voted against it and Jabr, who left the meeting, failed to vote.

Although the opposition parties opposed the agreement in statements published in the press,<sup>5</sup> and the Istiqlal called for a strike, the agreement was on the whole favourably received by the public. General Nuri was deemed prudent in waiting to see what the outcome of the Persian nationalization would be before Iraq should embark on a similar experiment, and his steadfastness in carrying on the negotiations amidst his opponents' protests and opposition was fully appreciated by the entire nation.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76. See also a statement to this effect by the Minister of Finance, *ibid.*, pp. 124-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 134.

<sup>4</sup> *Proc. Senate*, 25th Sess., 1951-2, pp. 47-51, 52, 57.

<sup>5</sup> National Democratic Party, Cultural Committee, *Qadiyat al-Naft al-Iraqi* (Baghdad, 1952); Socialist Nation Party, *Hizb al-Umma al-Ishtiraki wa Ittifaqiyat al-Naft* (Baghdad, 1952).

<sup>6</sup> Some of the Istiqlal leaders told the present writer in 1955 that their demand for nationalization had strengthened Nuri's stand to obtain better terms during the negotiations. The co-operative attitude of the 1958 coup d'état regime towards the oil companies demonstrates Iraq's realization of the advantages gained from the 1952 oil agreement.



## THE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

The oil settlement, which provided abundant funds in the form of royalties, gave impetus to the Iraqi Government to move quickly towards constructive reforms. To achieve these reforms by an agency immune from certain inherent weaknesses in governmental departments an elaborate organization was created by an Act of Parliament, the Development Board.

The Board was created as an autonomous body in 1950. The original law provided for a body of six executive members, of whom three had to be experts in some branch of the development programme. The Prime Minister, as Chairman, and the Minister of Finance were *ex-officio* members. Amendments to the law provided for a Minister of Development, to become the responsible head to the Cabinet, and also increased membership by two (the Minister of the Board and an additional executive member). Executive members were appointed by the Cabinet, with equal voting rights, and might not hold any other official position. Two foreign members held positions as experts, while the Iraqi members (all of whom had held Cabinet positions) were selected on the basis of merit and past experience. The Board was also empowered to employ a number of technicians and specialists for consultation.

The Board was composed of a Council and Ministry; its staff was divided into four technical sections and the Ministry into seven departments. The functions of the four technical sections were as follows: the first for irrigation, water storage, drainage and flood-control projects; the second for transportation and the construction of bridges and public building; the third for mining and industrial projects; and the fourth for agricultural development. The seven departments of the Ministry were: Administration; Accounts; Legal Affairs; Special Bureau; Economic Adviser; State Land (*miri sirf*); and Summer Resorts. The heads of the technical sections and the departments were all on equal footing and each responsible directly to the Board Minister who acted as a co-ordinator; nevertheless differences among the heads, which had to be referred to the Minister, were often time-consuming.

The Board was financed in the main from 70 per cent. of the oil royalties; but the law provided also for proceeds from loans and revenues derived from the Board's own projects as well as from various other assets and interests. The estimated expenditure for the

first six-year programme (1951-6) was £155 million. More than one-third of this amount was budgeted for projects under the first section. In 1950 the International Bank provided a loan of \$12,800 for the Wadi Tharthar project, but \$6,500 were later cancelled owing to Iraq's ample supply of foreign currency.<sup>1</sup>

The Tharthar project, completed in 1956, is primarily for flood control. It connects the river Tigris at Samarra (about 60 miles north of Baghdad) with the Wadi Tharthar depression. A barrage has been constructed on the Euphrates at Ramadi which made it possible to divert its water into Lake Habbaniya. Projects for other dams on the Tigris and its tributaries had been started and others were under consideration. Extensive work on bridges and public buildings was undertaken, including hospitals and clinics, a Parliament building, and the Museum. Projects for generating electricity and initiating local industries were also under consideration.

At the outset some criticism was made of the long-term projects and the slowness with which they were carried out.<sup>2</sup> Some critics accused the Board of falling under foreign political influence,<sup>3</sup> and others raised the question of corruption and favouritism.<sup>4</sup> The most damaging criticism, which brought about a change in the status of the Board, was that too much power was concentrated in the Board's hands. As a foreign observer has rightly remarked, 'Overlooked was the fact that the framers of the original development law had believed concentration of power to be essential and that this concept had been approved by experts as well as by the Cabinet and Parliament of the day.'<sup>5</sup> In 1953 the Board's law was revised, resulting in further Cabinet influence and subjecting all Iraqi personnel to civil service regulations. The level of salaries of the Iraqi employees was lowered, which

<sup>1</sup> On 10 Oct. 1950 Iraq requested the International Bank to send a mission to undertake a general review of the country's economic potentialities and make recommendations for a development programme. The mission arrived on 25 Feb. and left on 27 May 1951. For the recommendations see I.B.R.D., *The Economic Development of Iraq* (Baltimore, 1952), pp. 103-11.

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Rida al-Shabibi, 'Mass'uliyat Majlis al-I'mar', *az-Zaman*, 10 Apr. 1952. See also his statement in Parliament on 15 Feb. 1953 (*Proc. Chamber of Deputies*, 13th Sess., 1952-3, pp. 65-66).

<sup>3</sup> Sadiq al-Bassam, 'Ma Hiya Ahdaf Siyasat Majlis al-I'mar?', *ad-Difa'*, 6 and 14 Dec. 1953; and Mahmud al-Habib, 'The Iraqi Development Board', *Southern Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 36, 1955, pp. 185-90.

<sup>4</sup> Fa'iq as-Samarra'i, 'Majlis al-I'mar', *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, 3 Apr. and 11 June 1952; and Jabir 'Umar, *al-I'mar wa Mashari'uh Fi al-Iraq* (Baghdad, 1954), pp. 27-32.

<sup>5</sup> S. J. Habermann, 'The Iraq Development Board: Administration and Program', *Middle East Journal*, vol. 9, 1955, p. 181.

led to the resignation of several of them, and morale tended to drop. In spite of these changes, which were regretted by some experts on the subject, the Board maintained an autonomous and independent status, rarely enjoyed by any other Government agency, and was on the whole immune from political influences. The success of the projects achieved—the benefits of which the people are just beginning to appreciate—vindicated the Board's steadfastness in the face of initial doubt and criticism raised both in Parliament and the press.

Shortly before the 1958 coup repeated criticism of favouritism and slowness in carrying out development schemes prompted the new Government to change the entire membership of the Board. In April 1959, to meet a budget deficit, it was announced that 'as a temporary measure' only 50 per cent. (instead of 70 per cent.) of the oil revenues would be devoted to development, and in May the Development Board was abolished, the Ministry of Development—to which it was attached—being replaced by a Planning Ministry, and its other functions going to other new ministries.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

A discussion of the origins and development of the Communist movement raises the question of its relevance in a chapter dealing with the prospects of reform. To the Iraqi social reformer Communism is regarded as a corrective to certain social maladies, but its identification with international Communism may constitute both a danger to the existing social order and a threat to the security of the Middle East. Whether it is regarded as a corrective to the newly developing social structure or a danger to it—depending on which group within Iraq is going to hold the balance in the present conflict of ideologies—a brief account of the movement may throw light on its significance in relation to social reform as well as to the trends since the coup d'état of July 1958.

The Communist movement in Iraq may be regarded as an offshoot of the Ahali movement;<sup>2</sup> but it was only when the Ahali group failed to persuade Bakr Sidqi to accept a liberal programme that the radical members of the group turned against Bakr and reorganized themselves as a bona fide Communist group. Hikmat Sulayman and Bakr Sidqi, it will be recalled, retorted by suppressing their activities and banished from Iraq Abd al-Qadir Isma'il and his brother, their two

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 28 Apr. 1959; *Mideast Mirror*, 10 May 1959.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 69–74 above.

outspoken members.<sup>1</sup> In order to put an end to any threat of Communism, Parliament had passed legislation in 1938 outlawing Communism in Iraq and punishing any person engaged in Communist activities with penal servitude or death.<sup>2</sup> In the circumstances the Communist movement suffered a set-back from which it was unable to recover until the coming of the war.

When, however, the Soviet Union signed the Non-Aggression Pact with Nazi Germany on 26 August 1939, the Communists in Iraq readily co-operated with the pan-Arab group, and when Rashid Ali seized power in 1941 they actively supported his regime. The sudden rupture of Nazi-Soviet relations was bound to affect the attitude of the Iraqi Communists toward their pro-Nazi compatriots. They shifted their loyalty to the democracies and began, with the Iraqi liberals, to make approaches to Britain. So far as the writer is aware, the first bold step taken by the liberals was the approach to the British authorities by George Mansur,<sup>3</sup> when he offered the co-operation of the 'Arab sympathizers with Democracy' in a letter addressed to Cornwallis on 9 July 1941. He said:

Hitler's recent attack on the U.S.S.R. has provided Great Britain with advantages which will ultimately end in British victory. Arab sympathizers with democracy cannot any more remain inactive or allow their countries' grievances to prevent them from rendering every possible assistance to Great Britain since the issue has developed into a world conflict between dictatorship and democracy, and democracy, of course, must win. . . . This is one reason why I believe Great Britain should take advantage of the present situation and approach the Arab problem from the right direction. . . .<sup>4</sup>

It has been observed that Communism, like many other ideologies, tends to be confined to the intellectuals before it infiltrates to the masses. In Iraq the movement remained almost exclusively confined to the intellectuals until the outbreak of the Second World War. The formal alliance of the Soviet Union with Britain during the war, with

<sup>1</sup> Abd al-Qadir and his brother, Yusuf Isma'il, went to Paris in 1937. Before their return to Baghdad following the coup d'état of 1958, after an absence of more than twenty years, Yusuf remained in Paris, but Abd al-Qadir returned to Damascus where he took an active part in the Communist movement in Syria.

<sup>2</sup> See Arts. 89 and 89A of the Baghdad Penal Code and Art. 1 of the Supplementary Penal Code.

<sup>3</sup> A Palestinian labour leader who escaped to Iraq in May 1941 to take active part in Rashid Ali's Department of Propaganda.

<sup>4</sup> A copy of the letter was supplied to the writer by George Mansur.



the relaxation of restrictions on leftist activities, gave an opportunity to the Communists to spread their propaganda far and wide throughout the country. In 1941 Comrade Fahd (Yusuf Salman Yusuf) emerged as the Secretary-General of the secret Iraqi Communist Party and issued a secret paper called *ash-Sharara*. Fahd claimed that he had been active in Communist activities in Iraq since 1934. His significance was not so much in providing leadership for the movement—his leadership was by no means universally accepted by Iraqi Communists—but in shifting its appeal from the intellectuals to the masses.

In 1943 the movement received further impetus when, after an alleged visit which Fahd had made to Moscow,<sup>1</sup> a 'national convention' was formulated and published in *al-Qa'ida* (another secret paper), which began to appear more regularly as the organ of the Communist Party. From the beginning splits within the party on personal and procedural grounds greatly weakened the movement and enabled the Government to arrest its leaders. The first faction that emerged was the Iraqi Communist League, soon to be followed by several others, and the grouping and regrouping of Communists continued in spite of the rigid restrictions and opposition of the Government to all of them.

In 1945, when the Suwaydi Government licensed five parties to be officially organized, the Communists applied to form the Taharrur al-Watani (National Liberation) Party. When the Government denied them permission, they inspired a number of Jewish sympathizers to organize the Anti-Zionist League, which the Government, unaware of its Communist leanings, permitted. The secret Iraqi Communist Party and other independent factions, denied official recognition, continued their clandestine activities. They took an active part in demonstrations, incited workers to strike, and aroused students to agitate against the Government. The Kirkuk strike of 1946, and the uprisings of 1948 and 1952, were perhaps the most outstanding incidents which the Communists could boast of having incited.<sup>2</sup>

The Kirkuk strike of 3 July 1946, although fully exploited by the Communists, was in the main the result of the bad post-war economic conditions. Wages of workers of the Iraq Petroleum Company,

<sup>1</sup> Fahd's foreign travel remained a mystery and perhaps his visit or visits to Moscow were more legendary than real, which he probably did not want to dispel for prestige purposes.

<sup>2</sup> For Communist participation in the uprisings of 1948 and 1952 see pp. 267 and 278 above.

though considered fairly good, had not kept up with the rise in prices, and there was a critical housing shortage.<sup>1</sup> When the workers' demands for an increase in wages and the formation of a trade union were not conceded, they struck and denounced their employers as 'imperialist exploiters'.<sup>2</sup> On 14 July, when the 3,000 workers appear to have seen no tangible results of their strike and were about to return to work, the Iraqi police fired into a demonstration of about 400 workers, killing five to eight persons. This action, which many an Iraqi did not fail to represent as having been inspired by the I.P.C., undoubtedly embarrassed the Company and aroused the criticism of opposition parties.<sup>3</sup> In order to ease the situation, the Company sent conciliators to the Iraqi Government to further an agreement between the workers and the Company. The workers were induced to return to work by the promise of improved living conditions and the concession of some of their demands. The Company approached the problem with sympathy and consideration: wages were raised from 16 to 75 per cent., daily allowances for rent were added, medical facilities were extended, and housing plans were made.<sup>4</sup> However, neither the Iraqi Government nor the Company would allow the workers to organize a trade union, since it would be liable to fall under Communist influence.<sup>5</sup>

Faced with such increasing discontent and outbursts of popular demonstrations, the Government instructed the Police Department to investigate clandestine Communist activities and the principal leaders were arrested at a surprise police raid in January 1947. Comrade Fahd and several other leaders of the secret Iraqi Communist Party and of the Iraqi Communist League were brought to trial and given severe sentences. Although Fahd and other leaders denied that their activities were revolutionary in character,<sup>6</sup> the court's sentences were based not only on the grounds of illegal activities but also on their intention to overthrow the Government.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Longrigg, *Oil*, pp. 177-8.

<sup>2</sup> 'Trade Union organization, though permitted by Iraq law, was in practice discouraged by successive governments and its place at Kirkuk was in part taken by Joint Committees of workers and management, working in friendly consultation' (ibid., p. 177).

<sup>3</sup> See *Liwa' al-Istiqlal*, 4 Oct. 1946; *al-Bilad*, 17 July 1946.

<sup>4</sup> See C. T. Barber, ed., 'Review of Middle East Oil', *Petroleum Times*, June 1948, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Andrew Roth, 'Iraq: Black Gold, and Poverty', *The Nation*, Apr. 1947, pp. 444-6.

<sup>6</sup> See text of the defence of Yusuf Salman Yusuf (Fahd) and Zaki Muhammad Basim before the court, in *ar-Ra'id*, 25 June 1947.

<sup>7</sup> See text of the court's sentences in *ash-Sha'b*, 3 July 1947.

While it is true that the Communists' ultimate aim was to overthrow the Government and establish a Communist regime, the 'national convention' of the Iraqi Communist Party and the official statements of its leaders stressed only their opposition to imperialism and foreign exploitation and advocated the establishment of a popular and democratic form of government. There was an element of truth in what Fahd stated in his defence, that his aim was to achieve certain objectives provided in the Iraqi constitution, namely a free and democratic system; but he complained that in reality these did not exist. Some of the Iraqi Communists, like Kamil Qazanchi and Sharif ash-Shaykh, who had distinguished themselves as serious-minded lawyers, began their careers as nationalists, but turned to leftist activities because they were gravely frustrated by the bureaucracy.<sup>1</sup> Sharif ash-Shaykh, whom the present writer remembers as a student who sincerely advocated pan-Arab ideas, was perhaps bound to embark on revolutionary activities when he discovered, after graduation from college, that his nationalist ideals were exploited by self-seeking nationalists. Serious doubt was thus cast on the wisdom of the Government's action when these and other leaders were merely thrown into prison at a time when drastic social and economic reforms were needed to mitigate the widespread discontent of the people and inspire confidence in the Government.

The uprising of 1948, in which the Communists took an active part, forced the Government to take further penal action against Communist leaders. Further investigations were made in 1948 and 1949 which resulted in the arrest of a few other leaders, who were also brought to trial. The four principal leaders, including Fahd, were again brought to trial on the charge of secretly corresponding with the Communists from prison, and were sentenced to death and hanged in public on 13 and 14 February 1949.<sup>2</sup> This action undoubtedly rid the

<sup>1</sup> Kamil Qazanchi, with Tawfiq Munir and several other Communists, were deprived of their Iraqi nationality in 1955 and were banished from Iraq. After spending three years in prison in Turkey on the ground that they had entered Turkey without passports (although they were forced to cross the Turkish border by the Iraqi police), they returned to Baghdad after the coup d'état of 1958 at the request of the new Iraqi Government. Qazanchi took an active part in Communist activities under the new regime. When he went to Mosul early in March 1959 to promote Communist activities in that city, he was killed by one of Colonel Shawwaf's army officers because his activities conflicted with the counter coup d'état of Colonel Shawwaf.

<sup>2</sup> The number of Communists who were arrested and thrown into prison exceeded 350. For text of the death sentence of the four leaders see *Sawt al-Ahrar*, 15 Feb. 1949. The four leaders were: Yusuf Salman Yusuf (Fahd), Zaki Muham-

country of a handful of active Communist leaders, but it hardly touched the basic cause of public discontent, which has in the past and will continue in the future to offer opportunities to adventurers to exploit the discontent of the masses by inciting them against authority.

Shortly before the coup d'état of 1958, the Government had set free all those who had engaged in subversive activities, provided they agreed to sign written statements that they had renounced the Communist creed and that they would become loyal citizens. This seemed to be the safest approach to meet subversive activities, but with the resources it had in its hands, the Government failed to raise the standard of living and put an end to corruption and exploitation. Thus no sooner had the previous regime been overthrown by the army, in collaboration with the nationalists, than the Communists suddenly emerged to take an active part in the eruption against the former rulers of Iraq and demanded the destruction of all the legacies of the past.

In answer to the question why the Communists in Iraq survived in spite of extreme measures against their activities, it must be said at the outset that the arrest of leaders by no means nipped the movement in the bud. The corruption among a wide circle of the former rulers of Iraq and the failure of the nationalists to organize themselves as an enlightened group ready to replace the leaders of the former regime gave the Communists the opportunity to dominate the scene by exploiting past grievances. To many an Iraqi the Communists addressed themselves as ardent nationalists who advocated the principles of nationalism, democracy, and socialism. This appeal made a great impression on the public, the intellectuals and the masses alike. Although many Iraqis have certain mental reservations about leftist ideas, they saw in the adoption of moderate socialistic measures a corrective to the present social order, in which feudalism still survives and the disparity between rich and poor is widening.

The adoption of moderate socialistic principles may be regarded as a healthy approach to social reform, and the history of Islam demonstrates that the Arabs have been capable of blending foreign elements

mad Basim, Husayn Muhammad ash-Shabibi, and Yahuda Ibrahim Siddiq. The Iraqi Government published six volumes comprising the evidence, documents, and other materials which the Police Departments had gathered regarding Communist activities. See *Secret Compilation Regarding the Secret Iraqi Communist Party* (Baghdad, Govt. Press, 1950). For a brief account of the movement see W. Z. Laqueur, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (London, 1957).



of culture and creating their own synthesis. Thus if Iraq, indeed the entire Arab world, could absorb ideas and institutions from both West and East in order to create institutions adapted to Arab needs, the experiment might well be worth attempting, since the Arabs have been frustrated by past experience in transplanting foreign institutions without adapting them to their particular needs. If a synthesis of foreign concepts and institutions should emerge, the Arabs in Iraq and the other Arab countries might be saved from domination by any one type of ideology. The danger is that the moderate Arab reformer, however, might succumb to the influx of radical leftist ideas before he had the time to effect such a synthesis.

#### THE QUEST FOR STABILITY AND REFORM

In reviewing the political development of Iraq since the achievement of independence, the lack of stability in government seems to be the most striking phenomenon to be observed. The various governmental changes made in order to achieve reform were perhaps natural and some of them necessary; they have not, however, been produced by peaceful methods as provided by the constitution, but by local forces and practices which were not compatible with a democratic system of government. According to the constitution Cabinets change either as a result of defeat in a general election or by a vote of lack of confidence in Parliament; but in practice Parliament never voted against any Cabinet, because of fear of dissolution practised indiscriminately, while control of the elections always assured the victory of the Cabinet. As a result undesirable Cabinets have been forced to resign either by dismissal (mainly by an expression of the sovereign's displeasure) or by *manœuvres*, threats, and rebellions engineered by an opposition group or groups. In the fifty-odd Cabinets formed since 1921, not a single one was changed by a truly constitutional procedure, save in the event of the Prime Minister's resignation in consequence of a conflict arising within his Cabinet.)

The unconstitutional (or extra-constitutional) methods that have been used to change Governments were as follows:

1. Political *manœuvres* in which one or more opposition groups tried to embarrass the Cabinet by certain tactical assaults such as agitation in the press, Palace intrigue, or an incident which caused dissension within the Cabinet and forced the Premier to resign. The

five governmental changes from 1932 to 1934 were in the main produced by these methods.

2. Tribal uprisings incited by the opposition in areas where there were tribal shaykhs unfriendly to the Cabinet. Three governmental changes were thus made during 1934-5.

3. Military coups d'état which were produced by the attempt of the opposition to alienate the loyalty of leading army officers from the Government and threatened to raise (or actually raised) a rebellion which forced the Cabinet to resign. Seven Governments were overthrown by military coups from 1936 to 1941, and one in 1958.

4. Popular uprisings produced by strikes and street demonstrations. A strike may suddenly begin by a trifling incident, but when the students and mob, incited by opposition parties, rushed to the street the demonstrations became exceedingly difficult to control. The Government, shouted down by familiar slogans, had to choose between a bloody battle with the mob and resignation. Three popular uprisings have taken place: two of them caused the fall of two Cabinets in 1948 and 1952, and one proved to be abortive in 1956.

The principal governmental changes that have been produced by violent means since 1932 were those of 1934, 1936, 1938, 1940-1, 1948, 1952, and 1958. It is to be noted that these coups have recurred in a cyclical form, each cycle maturing in a two- or four-year period.<sup>1</sup> After each coup a Government, in which the group or groups that produced the coup were represented, was formed. The discredited elements of the previous Cabinet would soon reappear, gather momentum, and, making use of certain favourable circumstances or resorting to the usual unconstitutional methods, return to power. The opposition, outmanœuvred by the more experienced elder politicians, would resort to dissident elements in the army or the street, and a coup d'état, supported by an already dissatisfied public, would suddenly erupt in a manner with which the Government could not possibly cope and it would be compelled to resign. In the 1958 coup the former regime completely collapsed. Moreover it is to be noted that after each coup the Government has tried to learn how to counteract the recurrence of the method used to achieve that coup. Thus when a certain method becomes obsolete—resulting in the occurrence of abortive coups (such as the control of tribal uprisings

<sup>1</sup> The tribal and military coups d'état before the Second World War recurred in a two-year cycle; those after the war in a four-year cycle. The military coup d'état of 1958 took place two years after the abortive coup of 1956.

in 1935, reorganization and subordination of the army after 1941, and control of street demonstrations in 1956)—the opposition abandons the obsolete method and tries to resort to innovations in political opposition and thus the cycle of eruptions goes on.

It may be now asked why the democratic form of government proved to be unworkable in Iraq as well as in the other Arab countries?

To begin with, democracy is a novel form of government and the people, who for centuries have been accustomed to authoritarian regimes, were neither familiar with it nor appreciative of its complicated processes. It is true that the Arabs have enjoyed a certain form of social democracy, but political democracy (in the form of parliamentary rule) ran contrary to traditional regimes in which the ruler, though he often listened to opposing opinions, made his final decision irrespective of the advice of counsellors. In certain periods authoritarian and even despotic rulers were accepted, and traditional Islam, although opposed in principle to despotic rule, has tolerated authoritarianism as a safeguard against anarchy and instability.

Following the First World War, when democracy had become fashionable, the ruling class (composed of the nationalists who co-operated with the Western Powers) accepted democracy without trying to adapt it to existing conditions. Parliamentary democracy worked to the satisfaction of the nationalists, since they used it as a forum to oppose mandatory control. When the mandate was terminated, parliamentary life began to appear as meaningless; for the elder nationalists, who inherited authority from the mandatory power, showed little respect for parliamentary control and began to betray authoritarian tendencies. The new generation, who became extremely active after the Second World War, discovered how scandalously democratic processes could be misused and began to advocate the re-establishment of a truly parliamentary system in which they could take an active part. The elder politicians (the oligarchs) resisted this trend and went so far, it will be recalled, as to suppress it by force. This conflict between the elder politicians and the new generation is perhaps at the root of the cyclical changes that have been taking place during the past two decades.

The experience of the other Arab States has shown that such a conflict has resolved itself by the disappearance of democratic forms of government and the establishment of bona fide dictatorships. Iraq has had her own experiments with dictatorships; but such experiments, as her past history has shown, were short-lived. Iraq's greatest asset—

which militated against permanent dictatorship (military or civilian)—lies in her social structure. The 'sectional' division of the Iraqi society has been deplored by many a social reformer, since it is incompatible with national unity and weakens social cohesion; but it has provided a check against any one 'sectional' division ruling over the others. The division of Iraq into Sunni and Shi'i communities (almost half-and-half) on the one hand, and into an Arab and Kurdish nationalities on the other,<sup>1</sup> has resulted in the operation of a check-and-balance system in which no dictatorship deriving its support from one section of the community can survive for a very long time. Perhaps no form of government other than the democratic will fit Iraqi society; but the regime previous to the coup d'état of 1958 betrayed such defects as corruption in almost all high Government positions, favouritism, and exploitation that there was almost universal agreement as to the necessity of complete change in the political process. Thus the present Government, headed by a Council of Sovereignty composed of three members (each representing one section of the community), took pains to assure the public that the main purpose of the coup was to overhaul the political structure and re-establish the rule of law on an equitable basis.

The sectional division of society, however, is only a negative factor, since it provides merely a check against dictatorship, not a positive factor for promoting a truly democratic form of government. Democracy, like other social institutions, must develop by a slow, steady process. Iraq will have to discover her own way of developing the form of democracy that fits her society.

#### CONCLUSION

The natural wealth at the disposal of the authorities, if spent on social and economic reconstruction, would make it possible for the Government to muster sufficient power to maintain order and security to the satisfaction of the people. This power can also be used to silence dissident groups and opposition parties. If, during the reconstruction period, the Government can inspire confidence and adjust the political processes to modern conditions of life, Iraq may well emerge as the model of a stable Middle Eastern State and perhaps the most powerful one.

<sup>1</sup> The Kurdish population has been estimated by C. J. Edmonds at about 900,000 (*Kurds, Turks and Arabs* (London, 1957), p. 3). The entire population of Iraq has been estimated at slightly over 5 million.

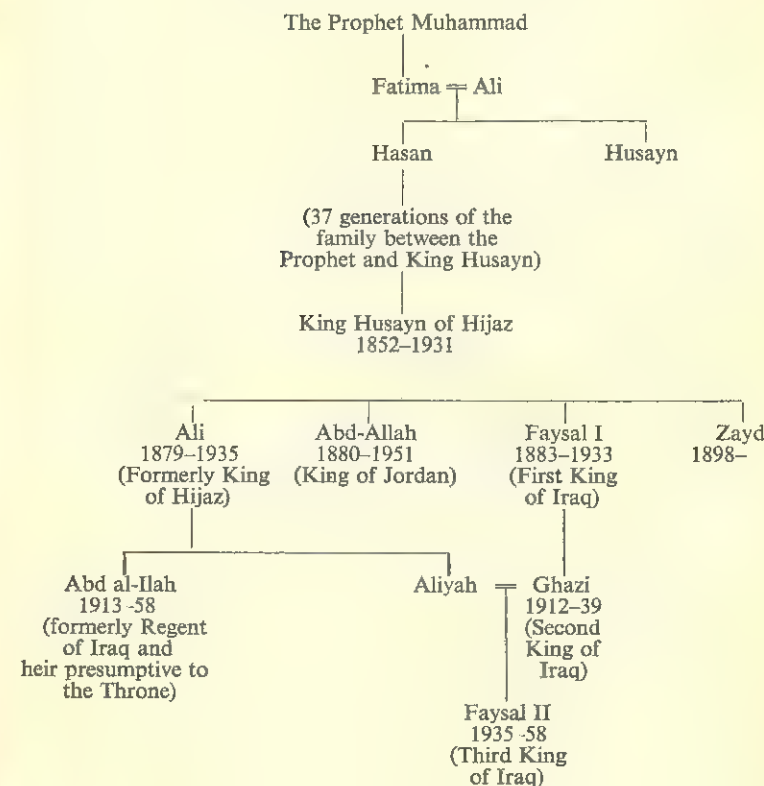


The democratic form of government, indefinitely suspended by the Government of the coup d'état, has been justly criticized for denying freedom of political expression and, indeed, left much to be desired in other directions. It was, however, not the fault of democracy that many sins were committed in its name; if it has failed to operate to the satisfaction of the people, it has failed because it was transplanted into a social milieu unprepared for it.

The return to democracy seems to be the safest way towards ultimate stability and progress. A truly democratic form of government can only develop by a steady evolutionary process, and this must be supported by democratic habits and traditions necessary for the functioning of democratic machinery. The Government of the 1958 coup d'état, in order to avoid the repetition of past experiences, should first of all provide the means that would inspire the people with the spirit necessary for the functioning of democracy. Iraq may well experience several further violent changes before she discovers the form of government that would fit her social structure. Long as this process may be, despite the impatience of the new generation, it might well produce a truly native democracy which can emerge only by an evolutionary process rather than by transplanting a form of government unfitted to the Iraqi social milieu.

## APPENDIX I

## THE HASHIMI FAMILY

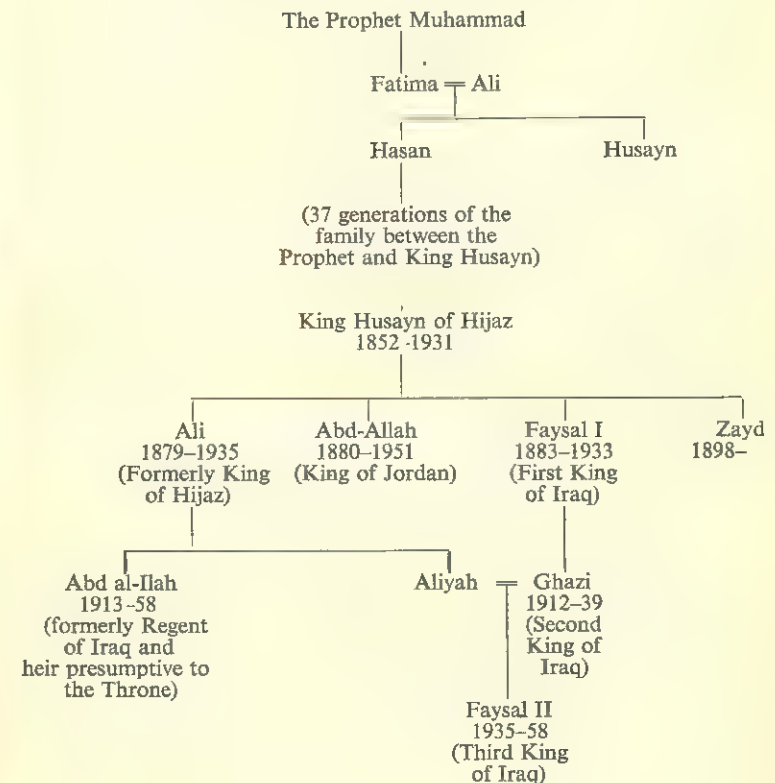


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## APPENDIX I

## THE HASHIMI FAMILY





## APPENDIX II

### THE IRAQI CABINETS

	<i>Prime Minister</i>	<i>Term of office</i>
The Provisional Government.	Abd ar-Rahman al-Gaylani.	23 October 1920– 23 August 1921.
The following Cabinets:		
1.	Abd ar-Rahman al-Gaylani.	10 September 1921– 14 August 1922.
2.	Abd ar-Rahman al-Gaylani.	30 August 1922– 16 November 1922.
3.	Abd al-Muhsin as-Sa'dun.	20 November 1922– 16 November 1923.
4.	Ja'far al-Askari.	22 November 1923– 2 August 1924.
5.	Yasin al-Hashimi.	2 August 1924– 20 June 1925.
6.	Abd al-Muhsin as-Sa'dun.	26 June 1925– 1 November 1926.
7.	Ja'far al-Askari.	21 November 1926 8 January 1928.
8.	Abd al-Muhsin as-Sa'dun.	14 January 1928– 20 January 1929.
9.	Tawfiq as-Suwaydi.	28 April 1929– 25 August 1929.
10.	Abd al-Muhsin as-Sa'dun.	19 September 1929– 13 November 1929.
11.	Naji as-Suwaydi.	18 November 1929– 19 March 1930.
12.	Nuri as-Sa'id.	23 March 1930– 19 October 1930.
13.	Nuri as-Sa'id.	19 October 1930– 27 October 1932.
14.	Naji Shawkat.	3 November 1932– 18 March 1933.
15.	Rashid Ali al-Gaylani.	20 March 1933– 9 September 1933.
16.	Rashid Ali al-Gaylani.	9 September 1933– 28 October 1933.
17.	Jamil al-Midfa'i.	9 November 1933– 10 February 1934.

## APPENDIX II

371

The following Cabinets:	<i>Prime Minister</i>	<i>Term of office</i>
18.	① Jamil al-Midfa'i.	21 February 1934– 25 August 1934.
19.	② Ali Jawdat.	27 August 1934– 23 February 1935.
20.	② Jamil al-Midfa'i.	4 March 1935– 16 March 1935.
21.	✕ Yasin al-Hashimi.	17 March 1935– 29 October 1936.
22.	X Hikmat Sulayman.	29 October 1936– 16 August 1937.
23.	① Jamil al-Midfa'i.	17 August 1937– 25 December 1938.
24.	1 Nuri as-Sa'id.	25 December 1938– 6 April 1939.
25.	2 Nuri as-Sa'id.	6 April 1939– 21 February 1940.
26.	3 Nuri as-Sa'id.	22 February 1940– 31 March 1940.
27.	① Rashid Ali al-Gaylani.	31 March 1940– 30 January 1941.
28.	Taha al-Hashimi.	1 February 1941– 1 April 1941.
29.	② Rashid Ali al-Gaylani.	12 April 1941– 29 May 1941.
30.	④ Jamil al-Midfa'i.	2 June 1941– 7 October 1941.
31.	4 Nuri as-Sa'id.	9 October 1941– 8 October 1942.
32.	5. Nuri as-Sa'id.	8 October 1942– 25 December 1943.
33.	6. Nuri as-Sa'id.	25 December 1943– 3 June 1944.
34.	① Hamdi al-Pachachi.	4 June 1944– 29 August 1944.
35.	② Hamdi al-Pachachi.	29 August 1944– 31 January 1946.
36.	Tawfiq as-Suwaydi.	23 February 1946– 30 May 1946.
37.	Arshad al-Umari.	1 June 1946– 14 November 1946.
38.	7 Nuri as-Sa'id.	21 November 1946– 11 March 1947.
39.	Salih Jabr.	29 March 1947– 27 January 1948.

## APPENDIX II

The following Cabinets:	Prime Minister	Term of office
40.	Muhammad as-Sadr.	29 January 1948– 6 June 1948.
41.	Muzahim al-Pachachi.	26 June 1948– 6 January 1949.
42.	8 Nuri as-Sa'id.	6 January 1949– 10 December 1949.
43.	(5) Ali Jawdat.	10 December 1949– 1 February 1950.
44.	Tawfiq as-Suwaydi.	5 February 1950– 15 September 1950.
45.	7 Nuri as-Sa'id.	15 September 1950– 10 July 1952.
46.	Mustafa al-Umari.	12 July 1952– 23 November 1952.
47.	Nur ad-Din Mahmud.	23 November 1952– 29 January 1953.
48.	(3) Jamil al-Midfa'i.	29 January 1953– 5 May 1953.
49.	(6) Jamil al-Midfa'i.	7 May 1953– 13 September 1953.
50.	Fadil Jamali.	17 September 1953– 7 March 1954.
51.	Fadil Jamali.	8 March 1954– 21 April 1954.
52.	Arshad al-Umari.	29 April 1954– 23 July 1954.
53.	10 Nuri as-Sa'id.	2 August 1954– 17 December 1955.
54.	11 Nuri as-Sa'id.	17 December 1955– 8 June 1957.
55.	(3) Ali Jawdat.	18 June 1957– 11 December 1957.
56.	Abd al-Wahhab Murjan	14 December 1957– 2 March 1958.
57.	12 Nuri as-Sa'id.	3 March 1958– 13 May 1958.
58.	Ahmad Mukhtar Baban	18 May 1958– 14 July 1958.
59.	Abd al-Karim Qasim	14 July 1958–

## APPENDIX III

GENERAL NURI'S MEMORANDUM OF  
15 DECEMBER 1940,  
SUBMITTED TO PRIME MINISTER RASHID ALI  
AL-GAYLANI<sup>1</sup>

To H.E. the Prime Minister,

It is essential for the success of any Cabinet in a constitutional government that Cabinet members should work together with perfect co-operation and frankness in all the matters they deal with in order to be able to study and discuss those matters in an atmosphere of full confidence and freedom, and to decide in perfect harmony what principles should be adopted in steering the ship of State for whose safe voyage they are responsible.

These two factors have an outstanding influence in the life of old established States even in ordinary circumstances. What, therefore, would be the effect of these factors in a State like the young State of Iraq, under present world conditions, the like of which in gravity and complication the world has never before experienced?

I have said this as a foreword to my outspoken statement of opinion to Your Excellency on the present situation and the difficulties which are being encountered by Iraq. Naturally, only when one is able to diagnose the disease properly can one prescribe the right remedy.

Iraq—being one of the revived Arab countries—was, and still is, interested in the Arab cause and sympathizes with it. She has lost no opportunity to show her interest and sympathy, both during her struggle to get rid of the mandatory regime, and afterwards when she began to enjoy the status of an independent State.

Your Excellency is certainly aware of the tremendous efforts made by Iraq in this respect both during and after the late King Faysal's reign.

Prior to the outbreak of the present war Iraq had spared no effort in trying to have the Palestinian question settled, according to the wishes of the people of that country. The last effort that was made in this connexion was the conference of the Arab Governments which was held first in Cairo and then in London, and whose findings were published by the British Government in a White Paper.

In that Paper they definitely outlined their policy in Palestine, to limit immigration of Jews and to lay the foundations of the formation of the desired National Government of Palestine. In our opinion the most important defect in this policy was that it did not mention a definite date for the formation of the National Government.

<sup>1</sup> *Iraq Times*, 21 Nov. 1941.



Some time after the publication of the White Paper the present war broke out and the Axis Powers seized the opportunity of the absence of a National Government in Palestine to start a propaganda campaign to serve their own purpose, whereby they expressed sympathy with the Arab cause and tried to stir up feeling among the Arabs, in spite of the fact that the Axis Powers themselves had already trespassed on their neighbours, an act which was in no way compatible with their pretensions of sympathy with the Arabs, especially as the countries which were the victims of their aggression were older, stronger, and better prepared than Iraq, and also had stronger racial and religious ties binding them to the Axis peoples than had the Arabs.

During this period Iraq was looking for an opportunity to urge the British Government to form a National Government in Palestine, having at heart the interests both of the British and the Arab nations. Your Excellency is certainly aware that things had gone so far that a semi-official proposal was submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies through Colonel Newcombe, suggesting the entrance of Iraq into the war on the British side in the East in return for the settlement of the Palestinian question by Great Britain, so as to meet the wishes of the Palestinian Arabs in a manner not incompatible with British policy as outlined in the White Paper. Undoubtedly, that step by Iraq was all that any State could take in a question of such interest to her.

The difficulty encountered by Iraq was due to the existence of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty and to the feeling among Iraqis that Great Britain should be just to the Arabs of Palestine. This difficulty became graver when the German army invaded the Low Countries and Belgium, and after the subsequent speedy collapse of France.

The people of Iraq, as was the case with all the other nations of the world, were so struck with amazement that they began to consider the question of the safety of their own country, resorting to various solutions and hypotheses. Some of the leaders of Iraq even went so far as to believe firmly in the speedy and inevitable collapse of the British Empire, after which Iraq would be left alone to her fate. Those leaders then considered it necessary to think out a plan for Iraq by which she should emerge safely from this world-wide struggle which no one had anticipated.

Now the situation has changed, and six months have already elapsed since the collapse of France. The sequence of events has shown that the fall of the British Empire is not easily accomplished. Britain has stood firm against the storm, as she was expected to do by a few of the world's leading men who had wide experience of the moral and material potentialities of this Empire.

Although the result of the war is still in the hands of fate, yet the course of events shows that, in spite of the collapse of France, the British Empire is able alone to stand against the Axis Powers, and that her fall is no longer inevitable, as some so firmly believed last summer.

I now turn to the main subject which prompted me to write this memorandum, namely, the question of the difficulty which has recently arisen between the British Government and ourselves, owing to a misunderstanding caused by what has been published in the newspapers and by certain rumours which established facts do not support.

The people, as well as the Government of Iraq, are unanimous in seeking the safety of their country before anything else and in following the road which leads to that safety. Should the safety of our country be threatened it would then be the imperative duty of every one of us to parry the danger at once, without stopping to think how to extricate ourselves from censure and responsibility, or how each one of us might try to shake such blame or responsibility from his shoulders and to shift them on to those of others.

I, therefore, request your Excellency to allow me to submit the following points:

(1) For the first time in the history of Iraq we have received an official Note from the Government of the United States, dated 5th instant, in which they express their keen interest in the welfare of Iraq and their anxiety that Iraq should retain her independence. They confirm in their Note their policy to assist Great Britain with all the means available to them, short of a declaration of war, and state that the said assistance will increase day by day.

They advise the Iraqi Government to co-operate with the British Government, for the Government of the United States are convinced, and sufficient evidence is available to them to show, that should Great Britain lose the war, Iraq would inevitably lose her independence, which would be a calamity for all the countries of the Middle East.

The Note adds that any refusal by Iraq to co-operate with Great Britain and any permission given by her to the continuance of the spread of a propaganda of hatred among Iraqis against the British would have an adverse effect on the American Government. When this is reflected in American newspapers, the American public will react adversely towards such a policy, which is against its own wishes. This would certainly have unfavourable consequences as far as the interests of Iraq are concerned.

The American Government have drawn the attention of the Government of Iraq to the wise policy which has been adopted by Turkey who is the neighbour of Iraq.

At the same time, we have received a Note dated 6 December from the Iraq Minister Plenipotentiary in Ankara, in which he states that the Turkish Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has informed him that the Turkish Ambassador in Washington has telegraphed to his Government, informing them that he has learned from official American sources that the Government of Iraq are inclined to reopen relations with Germany; that the present Iraqi Government will either have to resign or re-establish relations between Iraq and Germany; and that the Turkish Government desire to know the validity of such information.

When the Iraqi Minister mentioned to the Turkish Under-Secretary of State the contents of the Speech from the Throne on the subject, the latter said that he was inclined to believe that the policy of the Iraqi Government was to co-operate with Great Britain. Yet he would be very pleased if he could have an assurance contradicting the information he had received from their Ambassador at Washington.

Such interest on the part of America in Iraq gives us a further opportunity for serving the Arab cause in a new field. It seems to me that the suggestion of sending an Arab mission, consisting of Iraqis, Palestinians, and Syrians, to America to explain the problems relevant to the Palestinian and the Syrian questions would help much in our endeavour to solve these two questions.

Should such a mission have at its head a capable person who can exploit the situation for the benefit of the Arabs, attract the attention of the American public as well as that of the persons concerned in that country, and convince them that his appeal regarding these two questions is a just one, his efforts will greatly help to overcome outstanding difficulties and will assist the British Government in getting rid of the active influence of the Zionists especially that of the American Zionists.

The Palestinian question is the root of all the evils which disturb and weaken Anglo-Iraqi relations. Any improvement in this respect will tend to improve and strengthen these relations. The American Government have already begun to show their interest in this question. The Council of Ministers have recently decided to create an Iraqi Legation in Washington and to appoint a chargé d'affaires.

I am in favour of reconsidering the question with a view to appointing a Minister Plenipotentiary instead of a chargé d'affaires, provided that the post is filled by an efficient person who should be supported by the Mission in question and obtain all possible facilities in carrying out his task in the best way, by using his official, as well as his personal, influence in its service.

(2) Article 4 of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty reads: 'Should . . . either of the High Contracting Parties become engaged in war, the other High Contracting Party will . . . immediately come to his aid in the capacity of an ally. In the event of an imminent menace of war the High Contracting Parties will immediately concert together the necessary measures of defence. The aid of His Majesty the King of Iraq in the event of war or the imminent menace of war will consist in furnishing to His Britannic Majesty on Iraqi territory all facilities and assistance in his power, including the use of railways, rivers, ports, aerodromes and means of communication.'

The present Cabinet have confirmed the policy of maintaining the treaty relations with Great Britain, and they are still determined, as before, to enforce the letter and spirit of the treaty. So long as this is the actual policy of the Government, I suggest that while the Cabinet is taking all necessary measures to establish a real understanding between the Allies on the one hand, and, on the other, is trying to solve the problems of Palestine and

Syria by co-operating with the said Mission, Iraqi public opinion should be directed towards this policy through the agency of the press and radio, and by avoiding any action that may cause suspicion about Iraq's willingness to keep her pledges and promises. Such suspicion will be harmful and its adverse consequences may not be fully realized at the outset.

(3) At the beginning of this memorandum, I pointed out the importance of co-operation and plain talk, and their effect on the success of the Cabinet in its action.

As I believe that it is impossible for us to overcome our difficulties and to continue to work successfully, except through real and full co-operation, I, therefore, consider it my imperative duty to draw Your Excellency's attention to the urgent necessity of taking all necessary steps for this co-operation.

I am forwarding a copy of this memorandum to the Chief of the Royal Palace to be submitted to H.R.H. the Regent.

I have the honour to be, &c.,

Nuri as-Sa'id.



LETTER FROM THE MUFTI OF JERUSALEM TO  
HITLER, 20 JANUARY 1941<sup>1</sup>

Excellence,

L'Angleterre, cette ennemie acharnée et rusée de la véritable liberté des peuples, ne s'est jamais lassée de forger au peuple arabe des chaînes pour l'asservir et le subjuguer, tantôt au nom d'une perfide Société des Nations et tantôt par affichage de faux et hypocrites sentiments d'humanité pour les autres, mais toujours en vérité pour les plus impérialistes desseins camouflés derrière les principes d'une démocratie et d'un internationalisme mensongers.

Le peuple arabe s'est trouvé par une coïncidence géographique au milieu des carrefours terrestres et maritimes qui forment d'après les Anglais le nœud principal des 'Communications Impériales Britanniques'. Pour cela, rien ne fut épargné pour créer des obstacles perpétuels entravant la liberté et le développement du peuple arabe. On peut même dire que la paix relative qui dure depuis plus d'un siècle entre la France et l'Angleterre, était due en bonne partie à l'entente tacite entre ces deux Puissances pour tenir sous leur joug les populations arabes, observant ainsi la loi d'un ignoble partage qui créait en tout cas un équilibre d'ambitions sans toucher à l'artère sensible des communications britanniques 'sacrées'! D'ailleurs ce partage d'influence entre la France et l'Angleterre servait à briser la résistance et les réactions des Arabes en les laissant aux prises avec des Puissances différentes et fortes. Mais la politique anglaise n'a pas pu à la longue défier le réveil du nationalisme arabe, d'où l'activité incessante de l'Angleterre pour créer aux Arabes de nouveaux obstacles contre l'acquisition de leur indépendance et de leur liberté. Et alors c'est l'histoire lugubre des dernières décades, qui offre aux yeux du monde le spectacle d'une lutte continue et acharnée.

En Irak, l'Angleterre dans sa politique traditionnelle de diviser pour régner, conçut le projet d'installer quelques millions d'hindous apportés des Indes Britanniques, ceci à côté de la population arabe autochtone. Le projet fut déjoué par une révolution sanglante et l'Angleterre a dû alors se plier devant le fait accompli, et vouer ses soins à l'exploitation immédiate du pétrole irakien. En un mot, le roi Feyceal I a accepté un *modus vivendi* et signa, malgré l'opposition de la majorité du peuple, un traité avec l'Angleterre, achetant ainsi l'indépendance relative du pays au prix de concessions pétrolifères. L'attitude de la Turquie pour adjoindre Mossoul à son territoire dictait au feu roi la nécessité de cette politique.

<sup>1</sup> Spellings of original reproduced.

Quant à la Syrie, elle était livrée à la France, pour briser son unité nationale et l'appauvrir économiquement afin de pouvoir mieux mater son esprit nationaliste. Après dix-huit ans de lutte, elle a pu arracher à la France le traité boiteux de 1936, reconnaissant son indépendance, mais au prix de concessions et de réserves unilatérales. Et alors l'Angleterre surgit pour barrer la route de la liberté à la Syrie, et se mit d'accord avec la Turquie pour neutraliser l'effet du traité franco-syrien, ceci de concert avec les Juifs qui craignaient une Syrie indépendante à côté de sa sœur la Palestine en révolte. C'est de ce temps-là que naquit l'accord anglo-franco-turc contre les Puissances et l'Axe. Ainsi fut le prélude en 1936 de la question d'Alexandrette et d'Antioche qui devrait aboutir à la cession par la France de la dite région à la Turquie d'une part, et à l'abolition sine qua non du traité de 1936 entre la France et la Syrie. Donc, de nouveau un jeu 'très démocratique' de l'Angleterre au dépens de la Syrie, ceci malgré les commissions et les rapports d'enquête de la Société des Nations, tous favorable à la thèse syrienne.

Par tour de rôle je passe à l'Egypte. Déjà depuis 1882, l'Angleterre s'y est installée, 'provisoirement'! parce que le peuple en révolte demandait au Khédive une constitution nationale qui devait mettre un frein à la prodigalité du prince et organiser le budget selon les intérêts et les besoins du pays. Mais la soit-disante démocratique Angleterre occupa le pays pour sauver le trône du Khédive sous prétexte d'assurer l'ordre à Alexandrie, tandis que la perfide Albion tissait de ses propres doigts les intrigues et fomentait les troubles et les désordres au moyen de ses propres agents provocateurs. La vérité est qu'il s'agissait du Canal de Suez et des... communications impériales. L'Egypte a attendu jusqu'en 1936 pour obtenir elle aussi son traité boiteux avec les réserves connues. Ce fait n'était pas dû à la générosité britannique, loin de là; mais tout simplement à la rupture de l'équilibre des forces en Méditerranée; l'Italie se dressant plus forte et plus menaçante aux 'intérêts' britanniques.

Vient maintenant après tant d'autres pays encore de la péninsule arabe, la Palestine. Vous connaissez bien, Excellence, sa cause, car elle a dû elle aussi souffrir de la perfidie anglaise. Il s'agit de créer un obstacle à l'unité et l'indépendance des pays arabes en les mettant aux prises directes avec les Juifs du monde entier, ennemis dangereux dont les armes secrètes sont la finance, la corruption et les intrigues qui s'ajoutent d'ailleurs aux baionnettes britanniques. Depuis vingt ans nous nous trouvons face à face avec ces forces différentes. Armés d'une foi invincible pour leur cause, les Arabes de la Palestine ont combattu avec les moyens les plus rudimentaires. En outre, la question palestinienne a réuni tous les pays arabes dans une haine commune contre les Anglais et les Juifs. Si l'ennemi commun est le prélude de la formation de l'unité nationale, on peut dire que le problème palestinien a hâté cette unité. Au point de vue international, les Juifs du monde entier se sont inféodés à l'Angleterre dans l'espoir que, [victorieuse, elle puisse réaliser leurs rêves en Palestine et même dans les pays arabes

environnants. En aidant les Arabes à abattre les visées sionistes, les Juifs et surtout ceux des Etats-Unis seront tellement démoralisés en voyant l'objet de leur rêve tomber dans le néant, qu'ils perdraient leur enthousiasme à aider la Grande-Bretagne et se rétracteraient devant la catastrophe.

Je prie votre Excellence de ne pas m'en vouloir d'avoir relaté ci-dessus d'une manière sommaire l'histoire de l'antagonisme arabe avec l'Angleterre, car il me paraît nécessaire de mettre en relief les causes essentielles qui agitent le monde arabe contre les Anglais. J'ai tenu surtout à préciser que ces causes ont leurs racines profondes dans des intérêts primordiaux et des problèmes vitaux et non dans des questions futiles à effets superficiels et passagers. La sympathie la plus chaleureuse des peuples arabes pour l'Allemagne et l'Axe est d'ores et déjà une chose acquise. Aucune propagande ne peut changer cette vérité. Libérés de certaines entraves matérielles, les peuples arabes sont partout prêts à réagir, comme de juste, contre l'ennemi commun et à se dresser avec enthousiasme avec l'Axe pour l'accomplissement de leur part dans la défaite méritée de la coalition anglo-juive.

Le nationalisme arabe doit à Votre Excellence, une dette de gratitude, et de reconnaissance pour avoir soulevé à plusieurs reprises dans des retentissants discours la question palestinienne. Je tiens par la présente à réitérer mes remerciements à votre Excellence, et vous assurer, Excellence, des sentiments d'amitié, de sympathie et d'admiration que le peuple arabe voue à Votre Excellence, grand Führer, et au courageux peuple allemand.

Je saisis cette occasion pour déléguer auprès du Gouvernement Allemand mon secrétaire privé pour entamer, au nom de la plus forte et vaste organisation arabe et en sa propre personne, les négociations nécessaires pour une coopération sincère et loyale dans tous les domaines.

Je peux résolument ajouter que les Arabes sont disposés à se jeter dans la balance et offrir leur sang dans la lutte sacrée pour leurs droits et leurs aspirations nationales, pourvu que certaines préoccupations d'ordres moral et matériel soient assurées. Il s'agit de précautions nécessaires à prendre devant un ennemi perfide et puissant qu'il est nécessaire de bien calculer les moyens et la force, afin d'engager la lutte avec la plus grande chance de succès. Cette prévoyance est de rigueur, surtout que l'Angleterre est appelée à agir et réagir avec toute sa force vu le caractère stratégique des pays arabes qui pourraient alors mettre en danger les communications impériales et rendre caduc tout contact des Indes avec la Méditerranée et la Turquie par le Golfe Persique, tout en amenant la cessation de l'exploitation et de l'écoulement du pétrole au profit de l'Angleterre.

Je conclus en souhaitant à Votre Excellence une longue et heureuse vie, et la victoire éclatante et la prospérité pour le Grand Peuple Allemand et pour l'Axe dans l'avenir le plus proche.

Je prie votre Excellence de croire à mes sentiments de grande amitié, de reconnaissance et d'admiration.

## APPENDIX V

SYRIA-IRAQ PROTOCOL SIGNED AT PARIS,  
27-28 MAY 1941: CLAUSES RELATING TO IRAQ<sup>1</sup>

Le Gouvernement français s'engage à donner satisfaction aux désirs suivants du Haut Commandement Allemand:

(a) Accord de principe sur la cession à l'Irak, contre paiement, du matériel de guerre stocké en Syrie jusqu'à concurrence des trois quarts de l'ensemble dudit matériel ainsi qu'il a été fixé en son temps.

Exception est faite en vertu des accords particuliers pour les armes nécessaires à la défense immédiate de la Syrie.

(b) Pendant la durée de l'état de choses actuel en Irak, escale et ravitaillement dans la mesure du possible des avions allemands et italiens avec octroi à l'Armée de l'Air Allemande d'un point d'appui dans le Nord de la Syrie (Alep).

(c) Utilisation des ports, routes et voies ferrées syriens pour les livraisons à destination de l'Irak.

(d) Sur instructions précises à donner par le Haut Commissaire Français, instruction sur le sol syrien des soldats irakiens dans le maniement des armes françaises cédées.

(e) Transmission au Haut Commandement Allemand (à charge de réciprocité) de tous renseignements recueillis sur les forces anglaises et sur les mesures de guerre dans le Proche Orient.

<sup>1</sup> London, *L'Amiral Estéva et le général Dentz devant la Haute Cour de Justice*, pp. 351 ff., R.I.I.A., *Documents on International Affairs, 1939-1946* (London, 1954), ii. 132.



# INDEX

- Abd-Allah (King), 337, 338-9, 343-4, 345.
- Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud, *see* Saud, Abd al-Aziz ibn.
- Abd al-Ilah, Amir: appointed Regent, 27, 140-2; role in alleged anti-Government plot, 137-9; exchange of messages with George VI, 146; supports Nuri's foreign policy, 146-7; and 4th coup d'état, 155; relations with Rashid Ali, 160, 201-4; and 5th coup d'état, 201-6; treatment of 'the Four', 206-9; and 7th coup d'état, 210-11; deposed, 212, 215; returns to Iraq (1941), 244-5; calls for real parliamentary government, 253 ff., 259; favours alliance with Turkey, 255; and Portsmouth Treaty, 262-4, 268-9; relations with political leaders, 278-81; calls on Gen. Mahmud to form a Government, 283-4; announces end of Regency, 286; continuing influence, 286-7.
- Abetz-Darlan Agreement, 230-1, 381; *see also* Syria.
- Abu 't-Timman, Ja'far, 29, 54; co-leader of Ahali group, 63, 72 f.; and 1st coup d'état, 82 f.; Minister of Finance, 91; statement on policy, 94-96; and Popular Reform Society, 111; role in Hikmat-Reformist split, 112, 116-17; opposed to Anglo-Arab co-operation, 309.
- Administration, system, 23-24.
- Afghanistan, 96, 329, 331.
- Ahali group, 63-64, 69-74, 81-83, 259, 358; *see also* Reformists.
- Ahrar (Liberal) Party, 257, 270, 273, 299 f.
- al-Alami, Musa, 171, 337, 339.
- Ali, Mustafa, 106, 109.
- Ali, Tahsin, 249 n., 251-2.
- Aloisi, Baron, 329 f.
- Anglo-Iraqi Joint Defence Board, 266 f.
- Anglo-Iraqi Treaty: (1922), 4 ff., 14-17, 309, 311; (1930), 6, 16 f., 23, 144-5, 175-7, 193, 311-15, 319-21, 348; and landing of British troops, 217-21, 246; revision proposed, 255, 261.
- Arab Committee, 164-5, 183-8, 208; — Committee of Seven, 165, 208.
- Arab League, 252, 309, 335-43, 344.
- Arab Legion, 225, 345.
- Arab nationalism, 2-3, 162, 168, 172, 347.
- Arab nationalists, 169, 178-89, 191-2, 344, *see also* Arab Committee.
- Army: intervention in politics, 33, 67-68, 74, 77-78, 79, 105-9, 118, 124-5, 129 f., 203, 259; growth of power and prestige, 76-77, 124; question of military dictatorship, 78, 107, 109, 112-13, 117 ff., 124; officers form rival groups, 108-9, 122-3, 131; relations with Reformists, 110-13; activities of 'the Seven', 'the Three', and 'the Four', 131-3, 154-5, 201-6, 210-11; and Rashid Ali Government, 212-13; *see also* Coups d'état; Four Colonels.
- al-Asil, Dr. Naji, 91, 330.
- al-Askari, Gen. Ja'far, 54, 85, 88-90, 127, 308.
- Assyrian uprising (1933), 7, 39, 42-43, 77, 320.
- al-Atiya, Shaykh Sha'lan, 52, 62.
- Axis propaganda, 168, 172, 229.
- Baban, Ahmad Mukhtar, 251, 264.
- Baban, Jalal, 143, 246.
- Baban, Jamal, 249, 267, 269.
- Baghdad Pact (24 Feb. 1955), 348.
- al-Bahrani, Ra'uf, 54, 160 n., 216 n., 237-8.
- Bakr Sidqi al-Askari, Gen., *see* Sidqi, Gen. Bakr.
- Barzanis, *see* Kurds.
- al-Bassan, Sadiq, 66, 143, 160 n., 202, 206 n., 249, 273, 302-3.
- Bevin, Ernest, 262-7, 269.
- Butti, Rafael, 99 n., 109.
- Cabinet: composition and powers, 20; frequency of changes, 27-28, 364, 370-2.
- al-Chadirchi, Kamil, 64, 72, 82, 259 f.; Minister of Economics, 91; split with Hikmat, 112; resigns and is banished, 117; heads National Democratic Party 261, 300; arrested in 1952 coup d'état, 284; and revision of Electoral Law, 302-3.
- al-Chadirchi, Ra'uf, 83 f., 86.
- Chamber of Deputies, *see* Parliament.
- China, 249, 333.
- Christians, 21, 25, 304.
- Churchill, Winston, 4 f., 218, 334.



Ciano, Count Galeazzo, 181, 186, 190, 240-1.  
 Clark, Maj.-Gen. J. W. G., 255 ff.  
 Clark Kerr, Sir Archibald (*later* Lord Inverchapel), 85 f., 320.  
 Communist movement, 13, 64, 125, 261, 278, 301, 358-64; Reformists and, 104-5, 109-10; suppression of, 118, 274, 361 ff.  
 Constituent Assembly, 13 ff.  
 Constitution, 13-18, 26-29, 250, 288-9; suspension of (1958), 288, 368; Second Amendment Law, 20, 288-9.  
 Constitutional Union Party, *see* Ittihad ad-Dasturi Party.  
 Cornwallis, Sir Kinahan, 216 f., 227, 246.  
 Coups d'état, 365; (1958), 20, 365; Bakr Sidqi, 69-92; 2nd (1937), 121-5; 3rd (1938), 130-3; 'alleged' (1939), 137-40; 4th (1940), 152-5; 5th (Jan. 1941), 201-6; Rashid Ali (Apr. 1941), 210-11.  
 ad-Daftari, Mahmud Subhi, 100, 128, 134, 138, 289, 296.  
 D'Albiac, Air Vice-Marshal J. H., 226 f.  
 Darlan, Admiral, *see* Abetz-Darlan Agreement.  
 Da'ud, Salman ash-Shaykh, 109, 304.  
 Davidson, (*later* Sir) Nigel, 14.  
 ad-Dawish, Faysal, 222.  
 Dentz, Gen. Henri, 231.  
 Development Board, 277 f., 356-8.  
 Diwaniya: *liwa*, 48, 113, 157; tribes, 49-51, 62, 113-16.  
 Drower, (*later* Sir) E. M., 14, 290, 298, 302 f.  
 Eden, (*later* Sir) Anthony, 196, 208, 335-6.  
 Edmonds, C. J., 144 n., 207, 290, 303.  
 Egypt, 279; relations with Iraq, 64-65, 273, 274-5; and Second World War, 195; and Arab League, 337-8, 341; union with Syria, 345; attacks Baghdad Pact, 348.  
 Elections: (1933), 36; (1934), 48-49; (1935), 58-59; (1936-7), 101-2; (1939), 143; (1946), 257-8; (1948), 272; (1952), 281-2.  
 Electoral Law, 21; reform suggested, 35, 135, 157, 255, 284-5, 302-3; inadequacy of 1946 and 1952 Laws, 207, 305; important innovations, 303-4; passing of 1946 and 1952 Laws, 304-5; issue of free elections, 305-6.  
 Erzerum, Treaty of, 324 ff.

Fahd, Comrade (Yusuf Salman Yusuf), 360 ff.  
 al-Farisi, Nasrat, 46, 246, 250, 264, 271 f., 278, 302-3.  
 Fawzi, Gen. Husayn, 130 ff., 152, 154-5, 157.  
 Faysal I (King), 13, 38-39; career, 3-5; policy and achievements, 5-9, 15, 30, 34-35, 307-8; death of, 7, 30-31, 43-44; visit to England, 39-42; and Assyrian uprising, 42-43.  
 Faysal II (King), 140-1, 286, 345.  
 Foreign policy, 23, 64-65, 95, 144, 307-50.  
 Four Colonels, the, 131, 155, 163; and question of Iraqi-Italian relations, 181, 192, 208; lead coup against Regent, 203-6; insist on Gen. Taha as Premier, 205-6; and issue of being retired, 206; and part in 6th and 7th coups d'état, 210-11; and Thirty Days' War, 221-6, 234-5; escape to Persia, 226-7, 235; fate, 236-8; *see also* as-Sabbagh, Col. Salah ad-Din; Sa'id, Col. Fahmi; Salman, Col. Mahmud; Shabib, Col. Kamil.  
 France, 4, 169-70, 177, 249, 256, 314; *see also* Abetz-Darlan Agreement; Syria.  
 Futtuwwa organization, 166 f., 173.  
 Gabrielli, Luigi, 181, 186.  
 al-Gaylani, Rashid Ali, *see* Rashid Ali al-Gaylani.  
 George V (King), 39-42.  
 George VI (King), 146.  
 Germany: diplomatic rupture, 146; subversive activities, 172-3; Haddad's mission to, 182-9; Arab declaration, 186-7; secret Axis aims in Middle East, 189-92; and Soviet Middle East sphere, 190-1; Mufti and Rashid Ali in, 236, 238-42; declaration of war on, 249-50, 333-4; *see also* Abetz-Darlan Agreement; Grobba, Dr. Fritz; Hitler, Adolf; Papen, Franz von.  
 Ghalib, Ali, 106, 138.  
 Ghazi (King), 42, 444, 66; and 1st coup d'état, 84, 85-89; and appointment of Hikmat as Premier, 87, 90-91; role in 2nd and 3rd coups, 123, 133; dissolves Parliament, 136; death of, 140; opposed to Anglo-French policies, 141.  
 al-Ghita', Shaykh Muhammad Kashif, 50, 52-53, 55-56.  
 Glubb, Gen. (*later* Sir) J. B., 225 f.  
 \* Great Britain, 14-15; relations with Iraq, 2, 4-5, 7, 40-41, 96, 168-72,

256, 317-21; policy in Middle East, 168-70, 175, 335-6; and 1930 Treaty, 175-6, 192-3, 218-21, 246-7; warns against pro-German moves, 193-4; and Rashid Ali, 194, 195-7, 217-21; urges Gen. Taha to curb army politicians, 208; armed intervention considered, 218; Thirty Days' War, 221-7, 235; terminates mandate, 310-11; position in Middle East, 347-8; Special Agreement with Iraq, 348-50; *see also* Anglo-Iraqi Treaty; League of Nations; Portsmouth Treaty.  
 Greater Syria scheme, 337, 338-9, 344.  
 Grobba, Dr. Fritz, 146, 151, 172-4, 183-5, 231 ff., 238.  
 Habbaniya, 222-3, 262, 312 n.  
 'Habforce', 224 f.  
 Haddad, 'Uthman Kamal, 165, 182-9.  
 Hadid, Muhammad, 72 f., 82, 104, 258, 300.  
 Hamandi, Ja'far, 117, 246.  
 al-Hasan, Shaykh Shanshul, 62, 161.  
 al-Hashimi, Gen. Taha, 53, 79 f., 201-2; opposes Midfa'i's policy, 128 f.; and 'the Seven', 132; Minister of Defence (1939), 134, 137, 139; — (1940-1), 160; supports Nuri's policy, 145 n.; supports pan-Arabism, 163; advocates revolt in Syria, 177; and Iraqi-Italian relations, 192; and Rashid Ali's resignation, 204, 207; Prime Minister (1935-6), 205-10; opposes Regent, 280-1; leads United Popular Front, 301.  
 al-Hashimi, Yasin, 29; Minister of Finance, 38; at London Economic Conference, 40; attacks Jawdat Government, 49; and Sulaykh plot, 49; Prime Minister (1941), 54-68; overthrow of, 69, 79-87; deported, 98; death, 137.  
 Haydar, Rustum, 14-15, 44; chief of Royal Diwan, 38, 47, 84, 86; Minister of Finance (1933), 38; — (1939), 134; at London Economic Conference, 40; Minister of Public Works, 46; protests against Hikmat-Bakr regime, 100; attacks Midfa'i's policy, 128; attacked by Nuri's opponents, 148-9; assassinated, 149-52; view on pan-Arabism, 163-4; belief in Anglo-Arab co-operation, 308.  
 al-Haydari, Da'ud, 249.  
 Hikmat, *see* Sulayman, Hikmat.  
 Hiskayl, Sasun, 14-15.  
 Hitler, Adolf, 189, 190-1, 230, 234-5, 239-40.

Holt, Capt. Vyvyan, 321.  
 Humphrys, Lt.-Col. Sir Francis Henry, 32, 311, 313-16, 319.  
 Husayn (King, of Jordan), 345.  
 Husayn, Sharif, 3, 169.  
 al-Husayni, Haj Amin, *see* Mufti of Jerusalem.  
 Ibrahim, Abd al-Fattah, 72 f., 259, 261, 300.  
 Ibrahim, Yusuf Izz ad-Din, 91, 117.  
 Ikha' al-Watani (National Brotherhood) Party, 29, 35 ff., 39, 42-43, 45, 47-51, 54.  
 Inverchapel, Lord, *see* Clark Kerr, Sir Archibald.  
 Islah (Reform) Party, 274, 301.  
 Isma'il, Abd al-Qadir, 64, 73, 83, 117 f., 358-9.  
 Isma'il, Yusuf, 117, 358-9.  
 Israel, 273, 347 f.  
 Istiqlal (Independence) Party, 257, 260, 270, 275, 278, 280, 299, 300-1, 353-5.  
 Italy: relations with, 176 f., 192-3, 208; Middle East policy and aims, 181, 189-92; Arab declaration, 181, 186-7; sphere of interest in Arab world, 190-1; support for Arab independence, 240-1; diplomatic rupture, 247, 332; declaration of war on, 249-50, 333-4; *see also* Mussolini, Benito.  
 Ittihad ad-Dasturi (Constitutional Union) Party, 274 f., 279, 301.  
 Ittihad al-Watani (National Union) Party, 261, 300.  
 Jabr, Salih, 46, 91, 114, 116-17; and Haydar's murder, 150, 153, 157; and pan-Arabism, 163-4; helps Regent, 211, 214; Minister of Interior (1940), 249 f.; Minister of Finance (1944), 251; Prime Minister (1947-8), 258, 261-70, 271, 347; and Jewish emigration, 276; death, 301.  
 Jamil, Husayn, 274, 333.  
 Jawad, Maj. Muhammad Ali, 82, 106, 120.  
 Jawdat, Ali, al-Ayubbi, 46, 203; Prime Minister (1934-5), 47-51; — (1949-50), 274-5; supports Regent, 160; and Anglo-Arab co-operation, 163; joins Regent in exile, 211; returns, 244; Minister for Foreign Affairs (1941), 246; Minister to U.S.A., 249, 333.  
 Jews, 21, 25, 276-7, 364.  
 Jordan, *see* Transjordan.  
 Judicial system, 24-26.



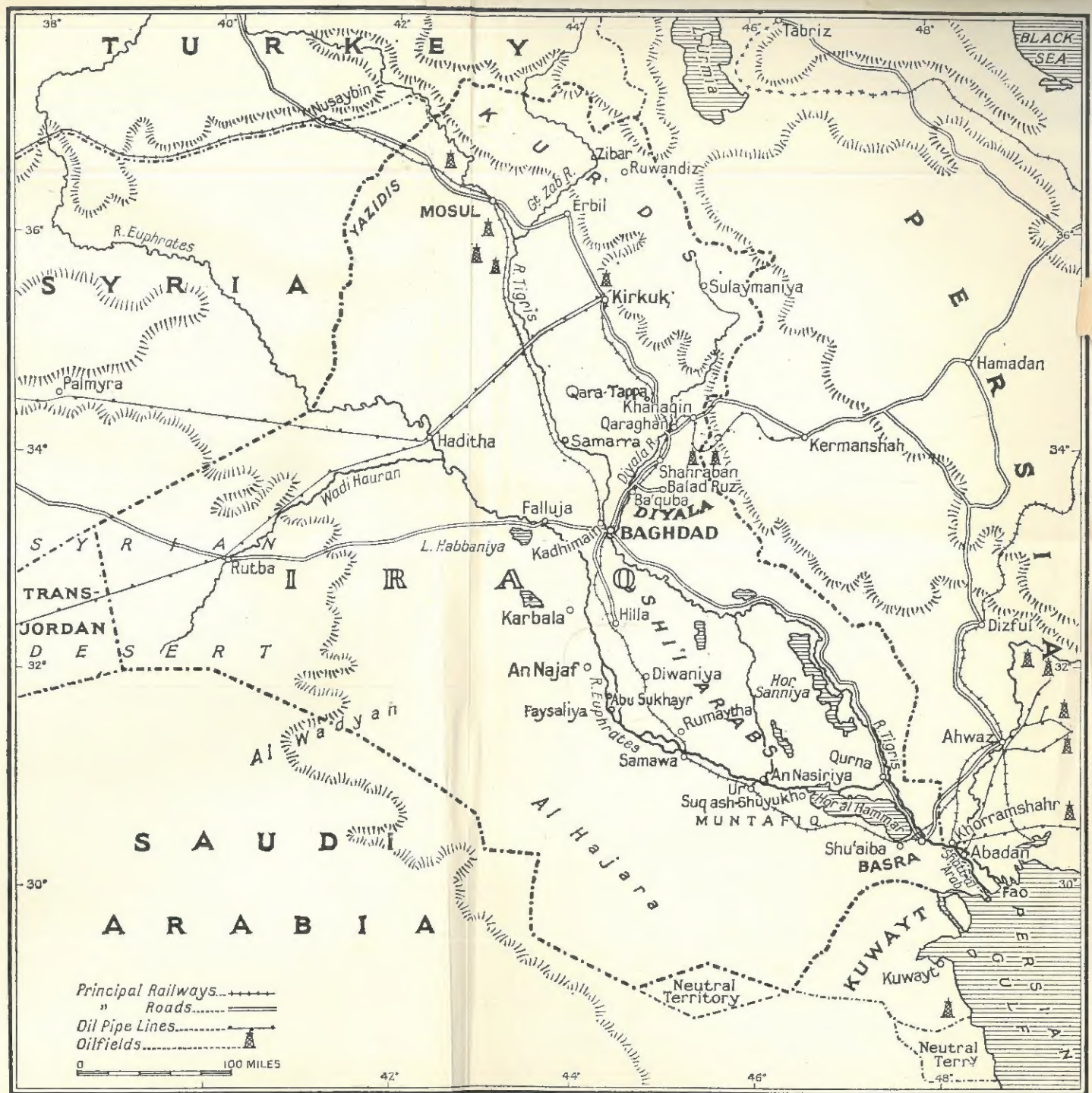
- Kamil, Ibrahim, 136, 148, 246, 248, 292 n., 296.  
 al-Karim, Capt. Hilmi Abd, 138-9.  
 Kerr, Sir Archibald Clark, *see* Clark Kerr, Sir Archibald.  
 Khawwam, Shaykh, 56-57, 62, 161.  
 'Kingcol', 225 f.  
 Kingstone, Brig. J. J., 225 f.  
 Kirkuk, strike, 256-7, 360-1; oil, 353.  
 Kubba, Muhammad Hasan, 251.  
 Kubba, Muhammad Mahdi, 299, 354.  
 Kurds, 60-61, 106 f., 252, 307, 367.  
 Kuwayt, 141.  
 Land policy, 95-96, 97, 104-5, 111, 114.  
 League of Nations: membership of, 1, 6, 312 ff.; Iraq mandate, 1-5, 14, 16 f., 23, 31-32, 168, 307, 309-17; *see also* Persia: Shatt al-Arab dispute; Sa'dabad Pact.  
 Lebanon, 169 f., 279, 314, 338-9, 341, 344.  
 Mahmud, Abd al-Wahhab, 284, 290, 292 n., 295, 300.  
 Mahmud, Ali, 117, 121 n., 123, 212, 216, 236-8.  
 Mahmud, Muhammad Ali, 117, 128, 216 n., 237-8.  
 Mahmud, Gen. Nur ad-Din, 227, 283-5, 305.  
 Mandate, *see* League of Nations.  
 Mansur, George, 359.  
 al-Midfa'i, Jamil, 163, 309, 211; Prime Minister (1933-4), 46 f.; — (1935), 52-53; — (1937-8), 123, 126-33; — (1941), 245-8; — (1953), 286; Minister of Defence (1934), 47; and 1st coup d'état, 83 f.; criticizes Nuri's foreign policy, 147; supports Regent, 160; and Anglo-Iraqi treaty, 200-1; joins Regent in exile, 211, 244; Minister for Interior (1948), 270, 272; and constitutional amendment, 289 ff.  
 Monck-Mason, G. E. A. C., 142.  
 Mufti of Jerusalem (Haj Amin al-Husayni), 144, 163-4, 170-1, 177-9, 180-9; letter to Hitler, 180, 378-80; declares *jihad*, 224; flight from Baghdad, 226-7, 235-6; activities in Germany, 238-42; escape to Cairo, 242-3.  
 Muhammara, Treaty of, 322.  
 Mumtaz, Ali, 100, 236 n., 249, 258, 273.  
 Mussolini, Benito, 231, 329-30, 332.  
 Muthanna Club, 108, 135, 166, 259, 299.  
 Nahhas Pasha, Mustafa, 337-8.  
 Najd, relations with, 322.  
 Najib, Col. Sabih, 131-2, 148, 149-50.  
 National Democratic Party, *see* al-Watani al-Demoqrati Party.  
 National Union Front, 301-2.  
 National Union Party, *see* Ittihad al-Watani Party.  
 Nationalism, 2-6, 12, 65, 71, 108-10, 117-18, 162-8, 175, 307, 309, 344.  
 Nazmi, 'Umar, 134, 143, 160 n., 206 n., 289-90, 296, 302.  
 Newcombe, Col. S. F., 171.  
 Newton, Sir Basil, 174 ff., 193-4.  
 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 348, 350.  
 Nuri, Gen. Abd al-Latif, 74, 81 f., 86, 91, 106, 130.  
 Nuri as-Sa'id, Gen., 38, 40, 44, 46 f., 54, 85, 98, 132, 160; Prime Minister (1930-2), 35-36, 317; — (1938-40), 133-58, 163; — (1941-3), 244, 248-51, 332-3; — (1946-7), 257-8, 260; — (1949), 273-4; — (1950-2), 277-8; and Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, 29, 311; Minister of Foreign Affairs (1941), 160, 162, 171, 176 ff., 181-2, 192-3, 195, 198-9, 202; memorandum to Rashid Ali, 195, 373-7; view of Rashid Ali, 197; joins Regent in exile, 211; amendment of constitution, 250, 294-6; initiates treaty with Turkey, 255, 346-7; and Portsmouth Treaty, 263-4; and oil agreements, 355; and 1952 elections, 279, 281; and Electoral Law, 302-3, 305; and Shatt al-Arab dispute, 325-30.  
 Oil: revision of agreements, 277 f., 287, 351, 352-6; agitation for nationalization, 353-4.  
 Organic Law, *see* Constitution.  
 Orts, Pierre, 27, 32, 316.  
 Ottoman Empire, 1, 2-3, 11-12, 13, 324-5.  
 al-Pachachi, Hamdi, 206 n., 251 f., 253-4, 270, 272.  
 al-Pachachi, Muzahim, 272 f., 274-6.  
 Palestine, 135, 169-71, 272, 273-4.  
 Pan-Arabism, *see* Nationalism.  
 Papen, Franz von, 178-81, 229-30.  
 Paris Protocols, *see* Abetz-Darlan Agreement.  
 Parliament, 16, 20-23, 27, 259, 288 f.  
 Persia, 348; relations with, 96, 144, 308 f.; Shatt al-Arab dispute, 324-30; and Sa'dabad Pact, 330-1; nationalizes oil industry, 353, 355.  
 Peterson, Sir Maurice, 126 n., 129, 173-4.

- Political parties, 29-30, 253 f., 259-61, 299-302; *see also* Ahd; Communist movement; Ikha' al-Watani; Istiqlal; Ittihad ad-Dasturi; Ittihad al-Watani; Sha'b; Taqaddum; Watani.  
 Popular Reform Society, 111, 117.  
 Popular uprisings, 365; (1948), 267-70; (1952), 278-83.  
 Portsmouth, Treaty of, 262-70, 271, 350.  
 Press, suppression of, 63-64, 93, 134, 256.  
 al-Qawuqchi, Col. Fawzi, 108, 166, 225.  
 Qazanchi, Kamil, 362.  
 Rahn, Rudolf, 231 f.  
 Rashid Ali al-Gaylani, 29, 37, 128-30, 154; Prime Minister (1933), 37-38, 45; — (1940-1), 159-205; — (1941), 217-35; Minister of Interior (1935), 54-68, 85, 87, 127; deported, 98, 130; chief of Royal *Diwan*, 134, 153; coups d'état, 201-6, 210-11; British attitude to, 217-21; revolt against Britain, 221-35; flight from Baghdad, 226-7, 235-6; activities in Germany, 236-42; escape to Saudi Arabia, 242; return to Baghdad (1958), 242.  
 ar-Rawi, Gen. Ibrahim, 204 ff.  
 Reformists, 96 ff., 104-5; and 1936 elections, 102-3; oppose nationalists, 104-5, 109; split with Hikmat Government, 105, 110, 111-12, 116-18; relations with army, 110-13; form Popular Reform Society, 111; failure of programme, 125.  
 Republic declared (1958), 20.  
 Ribbentrop, Joachim von, 188, 239-40.  
 Russia, 189, 190-1, 228-9, 252, 346, 347-8.  
 Ruwayha, Dr. Amin, 165.  
 as-Sabawi, Yunis, 163, 203, 212, 216, 227, 236-8.  
 as-Sabbagh, Col. Salah ad-Din, 129 f., 155, 192 f., 200-6, 210-11; flight from Baghdad, 226-7, 235; death sentence, 236-7, 238.  
 as-Sa'di, Da'ud, 128, 136.  
 as-Sadr, Muhammad, 59, 203 ff., 270 ff.  
 as-Sadun, Sir Abd al-Muhsin, 29, 311.  
 Sa'id, Col. Fahmi, 120, 129, 131 f., 155, 203-6, 210-11, 222; flight from Baghdad, 226-7, 235; interned, 236; death sentence, 236-8.  
 as-Sa'id, Nuri, *see* Nuri as-Sa'id.  
 Salih, Sa'd, 254, 299.  
 Salman, Col. Mahmud, 129 ff., 155, 203-6, 226-7, 235-8.  
 as-Salman, Dr. Muhammad Hasan, 216 n., 237 f.  
 as-Sammara'i, Fa'iq, 280, 284, 354.  
 Sa'ud, King Abd al-Aziz ibn, 216, 228, 242, 308, 322 f.  
 Saudi Arabia, 96, 321-4, 338-9, 341.  
 Second World War, 144-8, 152, 175-209; Iraqi declaration of war, 249-50, 333-4; *see also* Rashid Ali: revolt against Britain.  
 Sha'b (People's) Party, 29, 257, 261, 300.  
 ash-Shabandar, Musa, 216 n., 237-8.  
 Shabib, Col. Kamil, 130 f., 155, 203-6, 208-9, 210-11, 226-7, 235-6, 238.  
 ash-Shabibi, Shaykh Muhammad Rida, 54, 65, 102-3, 246, 264, 278, 302-3, 304.  
 Sharaf, Sharif, 215 f., 237-8.  
 Sharif, Aziz, 261, 300.  
 ash-Shawi, Nazif, 130 f., 134, 246.  
 Shawkat, Naji, 203; Prime Minister (1932-3), 35-37; Minister of Interior (1933), 46; — (1939-40), 134; Acting Prime Minister, 135, 138; Minister of Justice (1940-1), 160, 163, 164-5, 176, 198, 202; mission to Ankara, 178-81; Minister of Defence (1941), 216, 228; negotiations with German leaders, 229-30; sentence and fate, 236-8.  
 Shawkat, Dr. Sa'ib, 166.  
 Shawkat, Dr. Sami, 143, 166-7, 274, 301.  
 ash-Shaykh, Sharif, 362.  
 Sidqi, Gen. Bakr, al-Askari, 42, 78-80, 107-8; and tribal revolts, 51, 57-58, 62, 79-80, 114, 115-16; coup d'état, 73-74, 77, 80-92; Chief of General Staff, 91-121; assassination of, 120-4.  
 Sikkar, Abd al-Wahid, 48, 50-51, 52, 55, 114-15.  
 Smart, Air Vice-Marshal, 222-6.  
 Socialist Nation Party, 301.  
 Sulayman, Hikmat, 29, 42, 54, 309; Minister of Interior, 38; and tribal rebellions, 49-51, 75; and Ahali group, 63-64, 66-68, 72, 73-74; and Bakr Sidqi coup d'état, 73-78, 80-92; Prime Minister (1936-7), 90-125; alleged conspiracy, 137-40.  
 as-Suwaydi, Naji, 14-15, 163, 201, 215, 226-7, 236; Minister of Finance (1940), 160, 216; opposes Nuri, 192-3; sentence on, 237 n.  
 as-Suwaydi, Tawfiq, 160, 163, 210, 264; Minister for Foreign Affairs,



- as-Suwaydi, Tawfiq (*cont.*):  
 (1940), 206 n., 208; Deputy Premier (1944), 250; Prime Minister (1946), 254-7, 346; — (1950), 275-7; and draft Amendment Law, 290, 292 n., 294-5; and Electoral Law, 302-3.
- Syria, 4, 168 ff., 171, 177-8, 314, 344; relations with, 64-65, 274-5, 308; German air facilities in, 225, 230 f., 233-4; and Arab League, 338-9; *see also* Abetz-Darlan Agreement; Egypt; Greater Syria scheme.
- Tabikh, Muhsin Abu, 114, 160.
- Taqaddum (Progressive) Party, 29.
- Tawfiq, Husayn Fawzi, 149 f.
- Tikriti, Sa'id, 122-4, 131, 134.
- Trade unions, 59 f., 93, 97, 111, 302 f.
- Transjordan, 261, 338-9, 341, 343-5.
- Tribal shaykhs, 11; rebellions of, 49-51, 55-58, 113-16; and land policy, 114-15.
- Turkey, 96, 144, 255, 308; and Hikmat Sulayman, 75; Nuri-Shawkat mission to, 177-8; and Iraqi-German relations, 195; and Rashid Ali revolt, 227-9, 230, 233; and Sa'dabad Pact, 330-2; and Middle East Pact, 346; Turco-Iraqi treaty (1947), 255, 261, 346-7; and Baghdad Pact, 348.
- al-'Umari, Arshad, 227, 245, 251 f.; Prime Minister (1952), 256-7, 260; Minister for Defence (1948), 270.
- al-'Umari, Mustafa, 131 n., 246, 251, 272, 279, 281-3, 289-90, 302-3.
- United Arab Republic, 345.
- United Nations, 17 n., 252, 332 ff.
- United States, 194-5, 249, 256, 332-3, 347.
- Unrest, *see* Popular uprisings.
- U.S.S.R., *see* Russia.
- al-Wadi, Shakir, 122, 273.
- al-Wahhab, Jamil Abd, 289-90, 294.
- Watani (National) Party, 29, 36, 39, 45.
- Wavell, Field-Marshal Lord, 218, 224.
- Yaman, 324, 338, 341.
- Yamulki, Col. Aziz, 120, 130, 131-3, 137, 154-5, 157.
- al-Yasiri, Shaykh Alwan, 114, 215 f.
- Yazidi tribe, 61.
- Young, Maj. (*later* Sir) Hubert, 14, 27.
- Yusuf, Yusuf Salman, *see* Fahd, Comrade.
- Zaki, Gen. Amin, 205, 210, 212, 226-7, 236-8.
- Zaki, Muhammad, 29, 45, 59, 66 f., 302.
- Zaki, Muhammad Amin, 54, 160 n., 176, 249 n.
- Zayd, Amir, 141, 257, 277.





IRAQ AND HER NEIGHBOURS